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THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

REVISED AND PUBLISHED

DURING THE YEAR 1901.

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Eric Hayden's father, wife, daughter and son view site of Spurgeon's baptism.

The Rev. W. W. Cantlow, who baptized C. H. Spurgeon in the River Lark at Isleham.

TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE FREE GRACE OF GOD

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE OLD GOSPEL FOR THE NEW CENTURY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 6TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, December 5th, 1880.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matthew xi. 28.

You have doubtless heard several sermons from this text already. I have discoursed upon it, I know not how many times;—not so many times, however, as I intend yet to do if God shall spare my life. This verse is one of those great wells of salvation from which we may always be drawing, for we can never exhaust it. Our proverb says, "Drawn wells are the sweetest;" and the more we draw from such a text as this, the sweeter and the fuller does its meaning appear to us.

I am going, on this occasion, to use this passage in a special way, so as to bring out just one single point of its teaching. I might speak, if I wished to do so, of the rest which Jesus Christ gives to the heart, the mind, the conscience, of those who believe in him. This is the rest, this is the refreshment, which those who come unto him find, for we might read it, "I will refresh you," or "I will relieve you;" and I should have a very sweet topic if I were to discourse upon the wonderful relief, the divine refreshment, the blessed rest, which comes to the heart through believing in Jesus Christ. May you all experience that blessing, dear friends! May your rest, your peace, be very deep! May it not be a pretended restfulness, but a rest which will endure searching and testing! May your rest be a lasting one! May your peace be like a river that never ceases to flow! May your peace be always a safe one,—not a false peace, which will end in destruction, but a true, solid, justifiable peace, which will endure throughout your whole lives, and ultimately melt away into the rest of God at his right hand for ever! Happy are the people who thus rest in Christ; may we be among that number; and if we are so already, may we penetrate still more deeply into this glorious rest!

I might also speak, dear friends, upon the various ways in which

the Lord gives rest to believers; and I might speak specially to some of you who are believers, but who do not seem to enter into rest as you ought to do. There are some of us who get worried with the things of this world, or troubled by our own feelings; we are perplexed and tossed hither and thither by doubts and fears. We ought to be resting, for "we who have believed do enter into rest." Rest is our rightful portion: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" but, somehow or other, some who are thus justified do not seem to realize this peace, or to enjoy this rest as they should; and, peradventure, even while I am talking, they may find out the reason why they do not have all the rest and peace which they might have. Certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ did not speak to one particular class alone, when he uttered the words of our text. To all who labour and are heavy laden,—whether they be advanced Christians, or unconverted people,—he says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." I shall indeed rejoice if, as the outcome of what I shall have to say, it shall happen that some who came in here distressed in spirit, and bowed down in heart, perhaps even fretful and complaining, shall come to Jesus Christ over again, drawing near to him once more, and getting into touch with him again, and so shall find rest unto their souls. It will then be doubly sweet to come and sit around the communion table, resting all the while,—resting and feasting,—not standing, with loins girt and with staff in hand, as they did who partook of the Passover in Egypt,—but resting, even as they did who gathered at the last supper when the Master reclined in the midst of his apostles. So, spiritually, may your heads be resting on his breast, and may your hearts find refuge in his wounds, as you hear him again say to you, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Yet it is not quite that truth about which I am going to speak to you. I want to pick out just this one thought,—the glory of Christ, that he should be able to say such a thing as this,—the splendour of Christ, that it should be possible for him to say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These words, from the mouth of any other man, would be ridiculous, and even blasphemous. Take the greatest poet, the greatest teacher of philosophy, or the greatest king, and who is he, with most capacious soul, who would dare to say to all the labouring and heavy laden ones in the whole human race, "Come to me, and I will give you rest"? Where are there wings broad enough to brood over every sorrowing soul, except the wings of Christ? Where is there a harbour capacious enough to hold all the navies of the world, to give refuge to every tempest-tossed barque that ever crossed the sea;—where, but in the haven of the soul of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead; and, therefore, in whom there is room enough and to spare for all the troubled children of men?

That, then, is to be the drift of my discourse; may the Spirit of God graciously help me in following it!

I. And, first, I call your attention to THE PERSONALITY OF THIS

CALL: "Come unto *me*, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and *I* will give *you* rest."

If you look at the text carefully, you will notice that there is a double personality in the call. It is, "Come ye,—come *ye*—to *me*; and *I* will give rest to *you*." It is two persons coming near to each other, the one bestowing and the other receiving rest; but it is not, in either case, a fiction, a figment, a phantom, a myth. It is you, *you*, YOU,—you who really labour and are heavy laden, and who therefore are real beings, painfully conscious of your existence,—it is you who are to come to another Being, who is as real as you yourselves are, One who is as truly a living person as you are living persons. It is he who says to you, "Come ye to me, and I will give rest to you."

I want you, dear friends, to have *a very clear conviction of your own personality*; for, sometimes, people appear to forget that they are individuals, distinct from everybody else. When there is a guinea to be given away, and the jingle of it is heard in the distance, most men are conscious of their own personality, and each one looks out for himself, and tries to secure the prize; but I find that, often, in the matter of eternal things, men seem to lose themselves in a crowd, and they think of the blessings of grace as a sort of general shower that may fall on the fields of all alike, but they do not specially look for the rain upon their own plot, or wish to obtain a blessing for themselves. Now, then, you, *you*, YOU,—you who are heavy laden, wake up. Where are you? The call of the text is not to your sister, mother, husband, brother, friend, but to you yourself: "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give *you* rest."

Well, now, you have shaken yourself up, and you feel that you are a distinct personality from everybody else in the world; so next comes the most important thing of all, *you are to come to another Personality*. "Come unto *me*," saith Christ, "and I will give you rest." Here I ask you to admire the wonderful grace and mercy of this arrangement. According to Christ's words, you are to obtain rest of heart, not by coming to a ceremony, or to an ordinance, but to Christ himself: "Come unto *me*." He does not even say, "Come to my teaching, to my example, to my sacrifice;" but, "Come unto *me*." It is to a Person you are to come,—to that very Person who, being God, and equal with the Father, laid aside his glories, and took upon himself our human flesh,—

> "First, in our mortal flesh, to serve;
> Then, in that flesh, to die."

And you are to *come* to that Person; there is to be a certain action on your part, the movement of yourself to him who says to you, "Come unto me;"—a movement, away from every other confidence, to him;—a movement, away from every other ground of reliance, or door of hope, to himself, as the Person whom God has appointed and anointed to be the one and only Saviour, the great reservoir of everlasting grace, in whom it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. O glorious man, O glorious God, who

can thus speak with authority, and say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." I do entreat you to lay aside all thought of anything except the Christ, living, dying, risen again, and gone into the glory; for he points you, not to the house of prayer, nor to the throne of grace, nor to the baptistery, nor to the communion table; not even to the holiest and most sacred things which he has ordained for other purposes;—not even to the Father himself, nor to the Holy Spirit; but he says, "Come unto me." Here must your spiritual life begin,—at his feet; and here must your spiritual life be perfected,—in his bosom; for he is both the Author and the Finisher of faith. Let us adore the Christ in whose mouth such words as these are fitting and full of meaning; he cannot be less than divine who can thus speak to us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

II. Now, secondly, I want you to notice THE LARGENESS OF CHRIST'S HEART, as illustrated by this text: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Notice, first, the largeness of his heart *in singling out such needy ones to be the objects of his loving call.* Did you ever notice the picture that our Lord has drawn in these words? "All ye that labour." That is the picture of a beast that has the yoke upon its shoulder. Men think to find pleasure in the service of Satan, and they permit him to lay his yoke upon their neck. Then they have to toil, and moil, and labour, and sweat, in what they call pleasure; but they find no rest and no contentment in it; and the more they do in the service of Satan, the more they may do, for he uses the goad and the whip, and ever urges them on to fresh exertions. Now, Christ says to these people who are like beasts of burden, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

But they are in a worse plight even than I have described, for they not only labour, like the ox at the plough, but they are also heavily laden. Now, it seldom happens that men make a horse or an ox to be both a beast of draught and the carrier of a load at the same time, but that is how the devil treats the man who becomes his servant. He puts him in the shafts of his chariot, and makes him drag it along, and then leaps upon his back, and rides as a postillion. So the man labours and is heavy laden, for he has both to draw the vehicle and to carry the driver. Such a man labours after what he calls pleasure; and, as he does so, sin leaps on his back, and then another sin follows, and yet another, till sins upon sins crush him to the ground, and yet he has to be pulling and tugging with all his might at the same time. This double toil is enough to kill him; but Jesus looks in pity upon him, labouring under a sense of sin, and yet toiling to get pleasure in sin, and he says to him, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

Does Christ want the devil's hacks, then, when they are used up in Satan's service? Does he want to persuade them to leave their old master, and come to him? What!—these sinners that are only tired of sin because they cannot find strength enough to go on sinning,—or who are getting uneasy because they do not enjoy the pleasure they once did in wickedness,—does Christ call them to

come to him? Yes; and it shows the largeness of his heart that he should be willing to give rest to such labouring and heavily burdened ones.

But the largeness of his heart is seen in the fact that *he bids all such sinners to come unto him;*—all such sinners, I repeat. What a great deal that little word "all" includes! I believe that, generally, when a man uses big words, he says little things; and that, when he uses little words, he says great things; and, certainly, the smallest words in our language are usually those that mean most. What does this little word "all" mean; or, rather, what does it not mean? And Jesus, without limiting its application, says, "Come unto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden." Oh, the magnificence of the love and grace of Christ, that he should have invited them all to come to him! Ay, and he invites them all to come at once. "Come along with you," says he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden; come in a crowd, come in great masses; fly to me as a cloud, and like doves to their windows." There are never too many coming to please him; he seems to say, "The more, the merrier." Christ's heart will rejoice over all the multitudes that will come unto him, for he has made a great feast, and he has bidden many, and he still sends forth his servants to say, "Yet there is room; therefore, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden."

Recollect, also, that *Christ's promise is personally addressed to every one of these sinners.* If each one of them will come unto him, he will give rest to each one. To everyone that labours and is heavy laden, Jesus says, "If *you* will come unto *me*, I—I myself will give you rest;—I will not hand you over even to the care of my servant the minister, that he may look after you, but I will undertake the work myself, *I* will give you rest." Christ does not even say, "I will take you to my Word, and you shall there find comfort for yourself." No; but he says, "*I*, a Person, will give rest to *you*, a person, by a distinct act of my own, if you will but come unto me."

That personal dealing of Christ with individuals is indeed blessed. There is a poem of Tennyson's, which is, to my mind, the sweetest he has ever written; it is concerning a little child in a hospital, who heard that she was about to undergo an operation, through which it was not likely that she would live; so she asked her young companion in the next bed what she had better do. She bade her tell Jesus all about it, and ask him to take care of her; and then the child enquired, "But how will Jesus know me?" The little ones were rather puzzled because there were such long rows of beds in the children's hospital, and they thought that Jesus had so much to do that perhaps he would not know which little girl it was that wanted him to take such special care of her. So it was agreed that she should put her hands out of bed, and when Jesus saw her hands, he would know that she was the little girl who needed him. The scene, as the poet describes it, is most touching; I do but mar it in the telling; for, in the morning, when the doctors and nurses passed through the ward, they knew that Jesus had been there, and

that the little one had gone to him without any operation. He had taken care of her in the best possible way; and there lay the little hands out of bed.

Well, now, we need not do even as much as that, for the Lord Jesus knows each one of us, and he will come personally to each one of us, and give us rest. Though it is quite true that he has a great deal to do, yet he can still say, "My Father worketh, and I work;" for the whole universe is kept in working order by his almighty power, and he will not forget anyone who comes unto him. Just as a person, who knew that he had abundant provision, might say to a great crowd of hungry people, "Come along with you, and I will feed you all," so Christ knows within himself that he has the power to give rest to every weary soul that comes to him; he is quite certain of it, so he does not say, "Come to me, and I will do the best I can with you;" or, "possibly, if I exert myself, I may be able to give you rest." Oh, no; but he saith, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." It is quite a matter of course with him, for, let me tell you that he has tried his hand upon millions, and he has never failed once yet, so he speaks with an air of unwavering confidence. I am certain, as my Master was certain, that, if there is any soul among you that will come to him, he can and he will give rest unto that soul. He speaks with the consciousness of possessing all the power that is needed, and with the absolute certainty that he can do the deed which is required.

For, mark you, *Jesus gives this promise knowing all about the cases that he describes.* He knows that men are labouring, and that they are heavily laden. There is not a grief in the heart of anyone in this house which Jesus Christ does not know, for he knows all things. Your thoughts may be twisted in all manner of ways, and all your methods of judging may be like a labyrinth, a maze of which you think no one has the clue. You may be sitting here, and saying to yourself, "Nobody understands me, and I do not even understand myself. I have become entangled in the meshes of sin, and I cannot see any way of escape. I am perplexed beyond all possibility of deliverance." I tell you, friend, that Christ does not speak without meaning when he says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." He can trace the thread through the tangled skein, and he can draw it out in one straight line. He can follow all the windings of the labyrinth till he reaches its very centre. He can take away the cause of your trouble, though you yourself do not know what it is; and what to you is shrouded in mystery—an impalpable grief that you cannot get at or grapple with, my Lord and Master can chase right away. He speaks of what he knows he can do when he gives this promise, for his wisdom is such that he can perceive the needs of each individual soul, and his power is vast enough to meet all those needs; so he says to every labouring and burdened spirit within this house, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

Be it also remembered that, when Christ gave this promise, *he knew the number of those who were comprehended in that word "all."* Though, to us, that "all" includes a multitude that no man can

number, yet "the Lord knoweth them that are his;" and when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he did not speak without knowing that there are tens of thousands, and millions, and hundreds of millions, that labour and are heavy laden, and he meant to speak to all that vast throng when he said, "Come *ye* to *me*, and I will give you rest."

Am I making you think, dear friends, of the vastness of my Master's power and grace? Am I causing you to adore him? I hope I am. My own soul desires to lie prostrate at his feet, lost in a sweet sense of the greatness of that grace which can speak thus, and yet which speaks not beyond the truth when it says to the whole race of ruined men, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will"—to an absolute certainty,—"give you rest."

It must not be forgotten, also, that *what Christ promised was intended for all time.* Here is an individual speaking, who was "despised and rejected of men." Let him stand out clearly before your eyes,—the carpenter's son, the son of Mary, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" yet he said to those who gathered around him, "Come ye to me, and I will give you rest;" but he looked right over the intervening centuries, and he spoke to us who are assembled here, and then he looked on all the multitudes of this great city, and of this country, and of all the nations of the earth, and he said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." In effect, he said, "Till I shall come again to the earth, to sit upon the throne of judgment, I promise that every heavily laden soul that comes to me shall find rest in me." The sorrows of men are as many as the stars of heaven for multitude; and the men themselves are innumerable. Count, if you can, the drops of morning dew, or the grains of sand upon the seashore, and then hope to number the children of Adam from the beginning of time; yet our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to the vast mass of the labouring and heavy laden children of men, says to them, "Come unto me; come unto me; for him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; and whosoever cometh to me shall find rest unto his soul."

It shows, also, the vastness of Christ's power and grace when we remember *the many to whom this promise has been proved to be true.* You know that, throughout all these ages up till now, not a single labouring and heavy laden soul has come to Christ in vain. Even in the utmost ends of the earth, there has not been found a criminal so base, or a soul so closely shut up in the dungeon of old Giant Despair, but, on his coming to Christ, the promised rest has been bestowed upon him, and thereby Christ has been magnified.

III. Now follow me while I dwell, for a few minutes, upon THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS GOSPEL.

Jesus Christ says to all who labour and are heavy laden, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." *This invitation implies a movement,*—a movement from something to something. You are bidden to come away from whatever else you have been trusting in, and to move towards Christ, and trust to him; and when you do so, he will give you rest. How different this simplicity is from all the

complex systems that men set up! Why, according to some people's teaching, in order to be a Christian, and to carry out all the regulations of public worship, you would need to have a little library to consult so as to know at what hour you ought to light your candles, and how to mix incense, and the proper way to put on your millinery, and in which direction you should turn when you say a certain prayer, and in what other direction you should turn when you say something else, and whether your intoning, or your chanting, or your mumbling will be most acceptable to God. Oh, dear, dear, dear! all this complex machinery of man's inventing,—the so-called "baptism" in your infancy,—the confirmation in your youth,—"taking the sacrament," as many call it,—all this is a wonderful *hocus-pocus*, full of mystery, and falsehood, and delusion; but, according to Christ's teaching, the way of salvation is just this, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." And if you, dear friend, have come to Christ, and trusted him, you have received that rest and peace which he delights to give; you have found the kernel of the nut, you have reached the essence and the root of the whole matter. If your heart has abandoned all other confidences, and is just depending upon Jesus Christ, you have found eternal life, and that eternal life will never be taken away from you. Therefore, rejoice in it.

And, further, *this invitation is in the present tense:* "Come, *now.*" Do not wait till you get home, but let your soul now move towards Christ. You will never be in a better state for coming to him than you are now; nor will you be in a worse state for coming to him, unless it be that, by postponing your coming, you will be more hardened, and less inclined to come. You are now, at this moment, in need of Christ, so come unto him. You are hungry; surely that is the very best reason for eating. You are thirsty; that is the best reason for drinking. Or it may be that you are so sick that you do not hunger; then come to Christ, and eat of the provisions of the gospel till you get an appetite for them. I like, sometimes, when a sinner says to me, "I do not thirst for Christ," to say to him, "Then come and drink till you do thirst;" for, just as it is with a pump that will not work, you must pour water down first, so is it with some men. When they get some truth into their souls,—though it may seem at first to be but a very imperfect reception of the gospel,—it will help them afterwards to a deeper longing for Christ, and a more intense enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

At any rate, Christ says, "Come now," by which is implied that he means, "*Come just as you are.* Just as you are, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. You labour; so, before you have washed those grimy hands of yours, come unto me, and I will give you rest. You are faint, and feeble, and ready to die; but it needs no strength to come unto me. Faint into my arms; die on my bosom; for so you have already come to me." We do not come to Christ by the exertion of our own power to come, but by the cessation of the will to stay away. When your heart just yields itself up, drops everything that it is holding, and falls into the hands of Christ, it is then that the act of faith is

performed, and it is to that act that Christ invites you when he says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

"Well," says one, "I never did understand the gospel; it has always puzzled and perplexed me." Well, then, I will try to set it before you very plainly. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died for sinners, and you are bidden to come and trust him. Rely upon him; depend upon him; hang your whole weight upon him; come unto him, and he will give you rest. Oh, that he may, of his infinite mercy, reveal this simple truth to your heart, and that you may be ready to accept it just now! I do want to glorify my blessed Master, who brought into the world such a simple plan of salvation as this. There are some men who seem to be Parson Puzzle-texts; for they like to lose themselves amid difficulties and mysteries, and to display before their hearers the fruits of their great culture and their wonderful learning. If their gospel be true, it is a message only to the *élite;* and the many would have to go to hell if they were the only preachers. But our Lord Jesus Christ gloried in preaching the gospel to the poor, and it is to his honour it can be said that, even to this day, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." It is so blessed to think that there is a gospel that will suit the man who cannot read,—and that will suit the man who cannot put two consecutive thoughts together,—and that will suit the man whose brain has almost failed him in the hour of death;—a gospel that suited the thief dying upon the cross;—a gospel so simple that, if there be but grace to receive it, there needs no great mental power to understand it. Blessed be my Master for giving us a gospel so simple and so plain as this.

IV. I want you to notice just one thing more, and then I will close my discourse. It is this,—THE UNSELFISHNESS OF CHRIST'S AIM.

Come, you dear ones who love your Lord, listen while I repeat to you these sweet words of his, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "*I will give you.*" He does not say, "Come to me, and bring me something;" but, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." It is not, "Come and do something for me;" but, "I will do everything for you." This has, perhaps, been your trouble, dear brother, that you wanted, to-day, to bring Christ an acceptable offering; and in the Sabbath-school, or in some other form of service, you have been trying to honour him. I am glad of it; and hope you will keep on trying to do so. But take care lest you fall into Martha's mistake, and get "cumbered about much serving." For a while, forget the idea of coming to Christ to bring him anything; and come now, thou labouring and burdened one, and receive a blessing from him, for he has said, "I will give you rest." Christ may be honoured by what you give him, but he must be honoured by what

he gives you. There cannot be a question about the goodness of what you shall receive from him if you come to him; so, just now, do not think about bringing anything to him, but come to him that you may receive from him.

"I want to love Christ," says one. Well, never mind about that just now; but try to feel how much he loves you. "Oh, but I want to consecrate myself to him!" Quite right, my dear friend; but, just now, think of how he consecrated himself for you. "Oh, but I desire never to sin any more!" Quite right, dear friend; but, just now, think of how he bore your sins in his own body on the tree. "Oh!" says one, "I wish that I had an alabaster box of very precious ointment, that I might anoint his head or his feet, and that the whole house might be filled with the sweet perfume." Yes, that is all very well; but listen. His name is as ointment poured forth; if you have not any ointment, he has; if you have none to bring to him, there is plenty that he will give to you.

When my dear Master calls any to come to him, it is not for his own gain that he bids them come. When he presses his favours upon them, when he comes with great promises of rest, it is not a bribe with which to buy their services. He is too rich to need the best and strongest among us; he only asks of us that, of our great charity, we will be kind enough to take everything from him! This is the greatest thing we can do for God,—to be emptied, so that his fulness may flow into us. That is what I want to do when I go down to the communion table; I want just to sit there, and not try to think of anything that I can offer to my Master, but to open my soul, and to take in all that he is willing to give me. There are times with you shopkeepers when you are dealing out your goods, but there must also be times for bringing in, you know. So, now, open the great warehouse door, and let the goods come in wholesale. Let the whole Christ come into your soul.

"I do not feel," says one, "as if I could enjoy my Lord's presence." But why not? "Because I have been so hard at work for him all day; and now I have so much care, and I am so heavy laden." You are the very one whom he specially calls to come unto him. Do not try to do anything except just open your mouth wide, and he will fill it. Come now, and just receive from him, and glorify him by receiving. O sun, thou givest light; but not till God makes thee shine! O moon, thou art gladdening the evening; yet not with thine own brilliance, but only with borrowed light! O fields, ye yield your harvests; but the great Husbandman creates your grain! O earth, thou art full; but only full of the goodness of the Lord! Everything receives from God, and praises him because it does receive. So let my weary heart lie still beneath the showers of love; let my heavy laden soul rest in Christ, and gladden him by being glad in him.

God bless you all, and may Christ be glorified in your salvation and your sanctification, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 495.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XI.

Verses 1—3. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*

Had John's faith begun to waver? It is possible that it had. Elijah had his times of trembling and depression; then, why might not the second Elijah have the same sort of experience? Possibly, John wished to strengthen the faith of his followers, and therefore he sent two of his leading disciples to Jesus, that they might make the enquiry for themselves as to whether he was the Christ or not.

4. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:*

For the works of Christ are the proofs of his Messiahship. His teaching and his action must ever be the seals of his mission.

5. *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

This is the last, but not the least, of the signs of his Messiahship, that Jesus Christ preached so that the poor understood him, and delighted to follow him wherever he went. Many despised his preaching for this reason; but the Saviour mentioned this among the signs of his being sent of God: "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

6—11. *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

His position was a very high one; he was the evening star of the old dispensation, and the morning star of the new; but the light which shines after the sun has risen is brighter than any that the morning star can bring. He who has the gospel to preach has a greater thing to do than John the Baptist, who did but herald the coming of the Saviour.

12—15. *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Let him listen to what the heaven-sent messenger has to say; let him especially pay attention to his accents when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

16, 17. *But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*

"You would not join in our game; whichever we chose to do, to imitate a festival or a funeral, you would not take part with us."

18, 19. *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*

There was no pleasing them anyhow; they were prepared to find fault with any sort of man, whether he lived an ascetic life, or mixed with others as a man among men. "But wisdom is justified of her children." She sends the right sort of men to do her work, and God will take care that those who reject them shall not be without guilt: "wisdom is justified of her children."

20. *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

That was the point that Christ aimed at,—their repentance. He did not seek to dazzle them with wonders and marvels, but to break their hearts away from their sins. This is what his mighty works ought to have done, for they proved him to be the Messiah; and those mighty works also warned those who witnessed them that God had come near to them; and that, therefore, it was time for them to turn from their evil ways.

21—24. *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

There is a great depth of mystery here, which we cannot hope to fathom. The gospel was not preached to those who would have repented if they had heard it, and it was preached to those who did not repent when they listened to it even from the lips of Christ himself. Upon this latter class, the sole effect of the gospel preached to them was to plunge them into yet deeper depths of guilt because of their refusal of it. It is not for us to solve the mystery; it will be our wisdom to see that, being ourselves favoured with the plain declaration of the gospel, we do not put it from us, lest we perish even more miserably than those who never heard it.

25. *At that time Jesus answered and said,—*

So he had been talking with his Father: "Jesus answered." Very often, no doubt, the Saviour spoke with God when it is not recorded in the Gospels that he did so; but here a plain hint is given that Christ was in intimate communion and fellowship with God. At such times, great doctrines which, to the shallow minds of those who live at a distance from God, even seem dreadful, become delightful, and are lit up with unusual splendour. At that time, the doctrine of election was specially upon the heart of Christ because he was dwelling near to God himself: "Jesus answered and said,"—

25—30. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S PAST AND PRESENT WITNESSES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 13TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 7th, 1880.

"And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."—John xv. 27.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ ought to be believed upon his own unsupported word; first, because of the divinity of his nature. God cannot lie; and that Christ is God, is abundantly proved by his miracles. He did that which none but God could do. He ought also to be believed because of the perfection of his character, for even the enemies of the gospel have been obliged to confess that the perfection of the character of Jesus is altogether undeniable. They have critically examined it, but they have not been able to find a single fault or flaw in it. They have thrust the character of Christ into a furnace such as that in which men try silver, and they have heated the furnace seven times hotter than usual, yet has the character of Christ come forth from every trial unhurt. A perfect man ought to be believed when he speaks; the perfection of his character proves him to be worthy of confidence.

Put together, then, the Godhead and the perfect manhood of Christ, and I am not too bold when I say that he deserves to be believed upon his bare word without any further witness. Yet such is the natural infidelity of the human heart with regard to anything that comes from God, so resolutely do men shut their eyes against the light lest they should be reproved by it, that our Lord Jesus Christ has not left himself without witnesses. The first and chief Witness to Christ is the Holy Spirit. Read again the verse preceding our text, upon which I have already commented: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." The Holy Spirit is still here on earth, working spiritual miracles in the hearts of men; and those works of his are the attestation and seal of the mission of Christ, that he is indeed the Saviour of men. "There are three that bear witness in earth,

the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." The water and the blood are two things about which we ourselves become witnesses, as I shall show you directly; but the point I want you to notice just now is that, as it was with the apostles, so is it in a measure with ourselves, for we are called, as they were, to the most honourable office conceivable, seeing that we are called to do what the Holy Ghost himself deigns to do, that is, to witness to Christ; for, after he had spoken of the testimony of the Spirit of truth, he added, "And ye also shall bear witness." We are to be labourers together with the Holy Spirit; we are to stand, as it were, in the witness-box with him, and bear similar testimony to that which he bears concerning Christ: "He shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness." Oh, what an honourable position we are to occupy! What a grand work we are to do,—a work which an angel might envy us, for we are to be witnesses, together with the Holy Spirit, concerning Christ.

In handling this text, I shall have, first of all, to remark that *the apostles were witnesses to the facts of Christ's life.* He said to them, "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Then I shall have to show you that *believers now are witnesses to the results of Christ's gospel.* We have not been with him from the beginning, and therefore our witness is not concerning the facts of his life; but we can testify to the results of his gospel. When I have spoken upon those two themes, I shall close by noticing *the object of both these forms of testimony*, the apostles' witness to the facts of Christ's life, and the believers' witness to the results of those facts.

I. First, then, the apostles were stated by Christ to be WITNESSES TO THE FACTS OF HIS LIFE, from the time when they became his disciples, right down to the day when he was taken up into heaven.

You know, dear friends, how any historical fact comes to be accepted as a fact. It is by the weight of the evidence by which it is supported. If Tacitus, for instance, makes a statement in his history, as a rule we believe what he says because he is known to be a veracious historian. But Tacitus is certainly not more reliable than is Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, because Tacitus never died for the defence of any statement that he made; but those who bore witness concerning Christ, and were his historians, were ready to die and did die rather than deny anything that they had said concerning their Lord and Master. When we find discrepancies in the writings of historians, we examine and weigh the evidence as to any contradictions, so as to see which is the correct record of the facts in question. If anyone made a statement that such-and-such a thing happened yesterday, and you wanted to ascertain if the statement was true, you would call witnesses who saw it. Suppose you could not get those witnesses for a month, their testimony would be just as good in a month's time as it is to-day. Suppose you could not get them together for fifty years, their evidence would be just as valid; or if they had written their testimony, and had it duly attested, what they had written would be just as good evidence fifty years hence as it would be to-day;

and if true at all, it would stand true,—ay, as true as the testimony of these witnesses stands though eighteen hundred years and more have elapsed since they bore their witness. We have, concerning the life of Christ, the testimony of those who were with him from the beginning, and their testimony is good, because it complies with certain rules which usually apply to reliable evidence.

The first rule is, when witness is borne to any fact, that *the witnesses must be sufficiently numerous.* There were eleven true apostles, and eleven good men are quite enough to testify to any fact known to them. There were others besides the apostles who were with Christ from the beginning, and in the mouth of any two of these good honest witnesses a fact might be established, so that, in the mouth of the eleven, the truth remains beyond all doubt.

Further, *the eleven apostles had actual sight of the things to which they bore witness.* You remember that John says, concerning the blood and the water which flowed from Christ's side when the soldier pierced it with a spear, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true." And the same might have been said of all the facts which John records in his Gospel, for he was an eye-witness of them; and so was Matthew. He was on the spot, and what he wrote was not hearsay, but what he saw with his eyes, and his ears had heard, and his hands had handled. Well, now, eleven witnesses, who have actually seen a certain thing, would be a sufficient number to prevent mistakes; and, as I have already reminded you, there were many more than eleven witnesses on many occasions, especially the witnesses to our Lord's resurrection, for there were over five hundred brethren at once, and it was not possible that such a large company as that should have been deceived.

Again, *these witnesses bore their testimony at or near the time when the events happened,* for the apostles came forward, and spoke concerning Christ, and his holy, useful, and miraculous life, and his wondrous death and resurrection, just after the events had occurred. They only waited a little while, according to their Lord's instructions, and then they stood up, in the midst of Jerusalem,—Peter, who had been with Christ from the beginning, and the other apostles, bearing witness that these things were even so. Had they been liars, and false witnesses, they would have been put to confusion, and would have been unable again to open their mouths; but, as they said, these things were not done in a corner, they were common town talk, and admitted by everybody to be facts.

Moreover, in order especially to establish historical facts, *the witnesses must bear testimony on the spot;* and these eleven men did not go off to Rome, and there begin to publish that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he wrought miracles, and that he rose from the dead. They did go to Rome and everywhere else ultimately; but they began at Jerusalem, where they would have been contradicted if men could contradict them anywhere; but so fully was their witness known to be true that, the very first time they stood up to bear their testimony, though they were unlearned and

ignorant men, there were three thousand persons who became the disciples of their slain Master simply through their witness as blessed by the Holy Spirit.

I do not know whether you are prepared to doubt their testimony, but I am not. I am resolved to believe that what they spoke was true, and the more so because *they spoke very plainly.* When a man wants to take you in, he often speaks in a roundabout fashion. He guards his statements, and puts them in such a way that he can afterwards say, "Ah! you did not quite understand me, you made a mistake in thinking that was what I meant." But when the people, who listened to Peter and John, saw their boldness, and heard the plain manner in which they gave their testimony, they knew that the apostles were speaking of the things which they had themselves witnessed. There was no misunderstanding their language; they were plain, honest, simple-minded, straightforward witnesses to Christ, who gave their testimony with great plainness of speech.

Besides, *they all agreed in their testimony.* True, when we read the four Gospels, we notice that they contain just those little differences which prove the men to have been honest; for, if you set four men to tell a story, they will all tell it differently even though each one of them speaks the truth, for each of them will look at the matter from a different standpoint. If all four of them spoke in exactly the same words, and there were no apparent discrepancies between them, you would know that they had laid their heads together, and concocted the tale in order to deceive their hearers. A judge in court would soon find them out, and he would say, "That is a trumped up story, so they none of them go an inch beyond the other for fear they should contradict one another, and so be found out." But the four Evangelists differ in their statements only as honest men must of necessity differ if they are independent witnesses; and their agreement in the facts to which they testify helps to confirm their witness, and to make assurance doubly sure.

Best of all, remember that *these men had nothing to gain by their witness concerning Christ.* They left all, and followed him. Instead of gaining by their testimony, they were losers of their property, they were losers of their reputation, they were losers of their comforts, they were losers even of their lives. They were so certain that what they had seen was really true that, rather than deny it, "they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" yet not one of the eleven ever drew back, and denied the truth of the testimony that he had given; and even the twelfth, who was a traitor, confessed that he had taken blood-money for the betrayal of his innocent Master. In committing suicide, he gave such witness as "the son of perdition" could that, after all, the Bible was true. His testimony did not, in the least, invalidate the witness of the eleven apostles.

Now, my dear friends, it is upon the evidence of these witnesses

that the gospel first commenced to win belief among the sons of men. True, the Spirit of God witnessed to the truth of that gospel; but, as far as human instrumentality was concerned, the apostles also were witnesses, and they were good and sufficient witnesses. Nobody ought to ask for any better ones; and if anyone will not believe them, it may be truly said, "Neither would he believe though one rose from the dead."

II. Having spoken of the apostolic witnesses to the facts of Christ's life, I am now to speak of THE PRESENT WITNESSES TO THE RESULTS OF HIS GOSPEL.

We who were not with Christ from the beginning, cannot bear our personal testimony to the facts of his life. We neither saw him in Bethlehem's manger, nor on Calvary's cross, nor in Joseph's tomb, nor as he ascended into glory from the Mount of Olives, so we cannot testify to those facts as the apostles could. But we can bear witness to some other things; we can testify to the results of the gospel as we have realized them in ourselves; and here we are something better even than eye-witnesses, for we feel as well as see the things concerning which we testify. I want, my dear brothers and sisters, to put very briefly before you some things about which you are to bear witness of Christ. Read the text again, with the exception of the last three words: "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me;" and learn from it that you cannot witness for Christ unless you have been with him. You must have had spiritual dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ, and felt the power of his spiritual presence upon you, or else you cannot be such a witness as our text describes; but if you have been with him, you can testify of him.

The first thing to which some of us can bear witness is, *the peace-giving power of his precious blood.* We were once thoroughly convinced that we had broken the law of God, and we were under a dreadful apprehension that God, the Just One, would punish us for this sin. We sought in all sorts of ways to find comfort, but we never found any; we tried every nostrum of the wise men of the day, but they all failed us altogether. But the very first time that, by faith, we saw Jesus hanging on the cross, and knew that, by his sacrifice, he had made atonement for our sin,—I say that, the very moment we put our trust in him, our conscience found a wonderful peace and rest. Was it not so with you, beloved? You were, by faith, with Jesus as you saw him hanging upon the accursed tree as your Substitute and Surety; did you not then, by the grace of God, find immediate relief from the terrible burden of sin, which threatened to crush you to the earth? Well, now that you have thus been with him, you can bear witness to that fact, can you not?

I know that my witness about it did not need to be told with my lips, for I had not long been in the house, that morning when I found the Saviour, before one who had been anxious about me, said, "There is a change come over my son;" and a delicate question was put, which soon drew out of me the confession that I had looked to Christ, and that I was lightened. Why, they could all see in my face the evidence of the change that had been wrought; there

was all the difference between bondage and liberty, or between despair and delight; and it was because I had been with Christ that I had, in a moment, leaped out of nature's darkness into his marvellous light. So, now, whenever anybody says to me, "Your view of the atonement, you know, is very old-fashioned, the doctrine of substitution is quite out of date;" I am not at all shaken in my belief. The gentlemen of the modern-thought school, who have been to Germany for their theology, do not like that glorious doctrine of substitution. They think that the atonement is a something or other, that in some way or other, somehow or other, has something or other to do with the salvation of men; but I tell them that their cloudy gospel might have surrounded me till my hair grew grey, but I should never have been any the better for it. I should never have found peace with God, nor come to love the Lord at all, if it had not been that I distinctly saw that he, who knew no sin, was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in him. When I realized that, although I had gone astray from God, and broken his righteous law, he had laid on Christ my iniquity, and punished him in my stead, my soul found rest at once; and, to this day, it cannot rest under any other explanation of the atonement of Christ. So I bear my own personal witness, and many of you can heartily join with me in bearing similar testimony. You have been with Christ, so you can speak of the power of his substitutionary sacrifice as begetting peace in your soul.

Next, we can bear witness to another thing. As soon as we believed in Jesus Christ, *we found ourselves strangely altered.* Perhaps we had formerly had a merely moral struggle against sin; that was quite proper as far as it went, yet we never succeeded in that struggle. I have known many persons, who were accustomed to give way to passion, and who never could curb their temper; but when they believed in Jesus, to their surprise they found that the lion was changed into a lamb. I have known men, who had fallen into the habit of using profane language, and who could not break away from the evil even when they became aware of the wrong of it; but when they have, by faith, looked to Jesus, and so have been saved, they have never had a temptation to use an oath again, all inclination to that sin seems to have gone clean away from them. Many a time have I seen a drunkard, who has signed the pledge,—a very good thing to do; but it has not been any use in his case, for he has not kept it. Yet have I known him, when he has been converted to Christ, keep that pledge, and a great deal more; he has gone beyond abstinence from strong drink, and has had multitudes of virtues. There are many persons, here present, who do not need to tell people that believing in Christ has wrought a complete change in them, because anybody who is acquainted with them can see it. One man's wife knows all about that change. She had a black eye last year, but she never gets one now. She is as happy as the birds in the air with that husband of hers who has given up going to the public-house, and who is now found walking in the ways of God. There is a mother, who said to me, "I know

that my boy is converted, sir. Oh, what a trouble he has been to me! What a rebellious, disobedient child he was; but, now, though he is only a little boy, he makes a conscience of obeying his mother, and he tries to make everybody happy." This is witness-bearing, and this is what our Lord Jesus Christ meant you who have been with him, and have learned of him, to do. His transforming hand has touched you, and changed you; and you can bear witness of that fact. Why, if all the unbelievers in the world were to say to some people whom I know, "The grace of God has made no difference in you," they would be obliged to laugh with a holy laughter like that of Abraham, they could not help it, for the grace of God has so completely changed them that, if hell were made into heaven, the difference would not be much greater than is the change from what they were to what they now are. Well, this is good witness; I pray God that many of you may be able to bear it.

There is a third witness which many of us can also bear. When we get near to Christ in holy fellowship, and commune much with him in private prayer, we find that our love for good things becomes very strong, our zeal for God's cause is intensified; and, moreover, *our love to all mankind is increased.* We find ourselves willing to forgive our adversaries, and we are anxious in every way to prove the reality of our love to God; but if we get away from Christ, we do not take much interest in holy things. Our chief concern then consists in making as much money as we can, or in enjoying as much so-called pleasure as we can. If any of you, brethren, try the modern theology, you will soon see whether it will do your soul any good. I have known some who have tried it, and I have noticed the change in their life and conversation;—no spirituality, no love to God, and no care about the best things. They talk about political religion, but there is very little of vital godliness that is ever spoken of by them. But if you get near to Christ, and learn the power of his precious blood, and dwell in him, and live upon him, you will then see whether it does not sanctify you. I am sure you must all bear witness, you who live farthest away from Christ, that you are worse men and worse women when you wander away from him, and that the nearer you get to him, and the more he occupies your thoughts, the more swiftly is your evil temper overcome, and your whole heart filled with love to God and love to men. I know it is so; and that is another witness to the truth of the gospel, for that which promotes holiness cannot be itself a lie. I lay it down as an axiom that whatever makes men holy must be true, because truth and right are in the same line of things. That which creates evil is itself a falsehood, and that which creates holiness is and must be true.

Another thing to which we can bear witness is, *the renewing power of God's grace.* Whenever we grow dull with regard to eternal things, and careless concerning our own souls, we find, I think, that getting near to Christ again, coming back to the cross, plunging afresh in the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"—

sitting at his feet again, eating his flesh and drinking his blood again,—all this wonderfully refreshes us. There is a fable concerning a bath, of which it was said that, if old men washed therein, it took the furrows from their brows, and made them young again; but, certainly, when we dwell in Christ, he takes away the decrepitude of our declining grace, and we grow vigorous once more. We renew our youth, like the eagle's, when our mouth is satisfied with the good things of Christ. Have not you found it to be so now, you who had grown dull and cold? Have not you been refreshed and revived by coming back to him? The very genius of the Christian religion is enthusiasm; but the enthusiasm is created by contact with Christ. As we come near to our great Captain, every soldier in the ranks of the King's army feels that he must be a hero. We look at his scars and wounds, and see what he did and suffered, and then we feel that it would be mean and contemptible on our part to be otherwise than altogether in earnest for so great and good a Lord, and for so grand a cause.

I think that many of you must also have noticed—and if so, you can bear witness to it,—*the comforting power of the presence of Christ with you.* All of you, who know the Lord, have had troubles of different kinds to carry to the Lord in prayer. I will suppose that you, my friend, have lost a good deal of money in business, and that you have fretted and worried a great deal over it. If it has been so with you, I will tell you when you worried over your loss; it was before you took the matter to the Lord in prayer; but after you had spread the whole case before him, it is wonderful how different it looked. The circumstances seemed quite changed, and you took up the cross, and you found it very light compared with what it had been before. Perhaps some of you know what it is to be teazed and perplexed by unreasonable and wicked men, and you have been apt to get very snappish under their attacks. If that is what has happened to you, my brother, I know when it was; it was when you had not been with Jesus, and tried to meet the trouble by yourself. But after you have had a few minutes of private prayer, you have come down into the arena, and you have seemed to say, "I am ready for you now; you may do what you like, for I am calm and quiet, and I can bear it all, for I have been with Jesus, and he has given me strength according to my day." If you have been slandered and persecuted for righteousness' sake, and have had your heart wounded by some cruel stab, you have been restored by getting near to Christ, and you have been able to sing,—

> **"If on my face for thy dear name,**
> **Shame and reproaches be,**
> **All hail reproach, and welcome shame,**
> **If thou remember me."**

On the bed of sickness, or by the grave where your loved ones are buried, your heart has been sustained and comforted if you have been with Jesus. Yes, that witness is true, and tens of thousands can confirm it, that there is no sustaining power in anything else that is worthy to be compared with the sustaining energy of com-

munion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have ever felt its gracious influence must know that this is the truth, for Christ's presence most wondrously bears their spirit up when everything else gives way.

One of the evidences of the truth of the gospel which, perhaps, strikes onlookers more than any other, is *the serenity with which the presence of Christ endows his people when they come to die.* Their end is often very peaceful, and very beautiful. There died, last week, not far from here, a young man, whose brother, as he watched him, saw tokens of such wonderful happiness in him that he said to him, "Brother, what can I do to be as happy as you are?" The dying man's answer was, "It is all in No. 1,500; it is all in No. 1,500." You know that sermon of mine about the brazen serpent.* The young man said to his brother, "It is all in No. 1,500. It is Jesus only, Jesus only. Look to Jesus, look and live. It is all there." His brother said that he could not tell exactly when he passed away, so sweet was the serenity that the presence of the Master gave him. I could take you to the Stockwell Orphanage, to the bedside of a little boy who may be in heaven by now; but when I saw him on Monday, he said to me, "I shall soon die, Mr. Spurgeon; and when I think I am going, as I sometimes do at night, I clap my hands at the thought that I shall so soon be with Jesus." Poor little fellow, he could hardly lift those thin hands of his yet he clapped them with delight at the thought that he should so soon be with Jesus! It would have done you good if you could have seen him, and so it would if you could have seen our dear sister, Mrs. White, the wife of our beloved elder, when she knew that she had a cancer which would soon take her home; the look of her face is with me now. I sat by her bedside, and it was more than a sermon to me; it made me feel willing to die at any time when I saw the calm serenity with which that suffering saint looked forward to her departure. She did not regard death as a thing to be spoken of as a dreadful and terrible matter, but she calmly spoke of being with Christ, which was far better than being with the dearest friends on earth.

This holy serenity has often convinced ungodly men of the truth of the gospel; and though you and I cannot at present bear that witness, yet very likely we shall do so in due season; and, already, so many thousands of saints have borne this witness to the power of faith in Christ that it ought to be regarded, and a deaf ear ought not to be turned to it. Look at the thousands of martyrs who have calmly stood at the stake, and been burned to death for Christ's sake, and yet have cried, "None but Jesus! none but Jesus!" and, faithful to the end, have gone up in a chariot of fire to be "for ever with the Lord." What but the gospel of Christ could string them up to such wondrous courage, and press their spirits into such a sacred equanimity that even death itself was despised by them, so that they cried, with the apostle, "O death, where is thy sting? O

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* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, "No. 1,500; or, Lifting up the Brazen Serpent."

grave, where is thy victory?" In all these points, ye also, who love the Lord, are to be witnesses for Christ.

I had many other things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; therefore, let me sum up all by saying,—Beloved brothers and sisters, members of this church, and members of the one Church of Jesus Christ, be good witnesses for your Lord, remembering that ye are standing up with the Holy Ghost to testify concerning him. Oh, be such witnesses that none need be ashamed of you!

Recollect that *witness must be personal, not hearsay.* A good woman in the witness-box begins, "She said, said she;" but the judge stops her, and says, "We do not want to know what she said, what did you yourself see?" So, dear friends, it is no use for you to try to bear testimony to the world about a thing you never saw and never felt. Personal godliness must be at the bottom of all evidence concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. If a man has no faith, let him not talk about faith. If he has never known the Lord, let him hold his tongue till he does know him, for it must be personal witness that must be borne if it is to be of any value.

Further, *it must be real, not fancied.* The judge would at once stop a witness if he said, "My lord, I thought," and he would say, "We do not want your thoughts, my dear sir. What did you see?" In like manner, we want to know what you have felt about Christ, not what you have fancied concerning him. What has been really true in your spiritual life? What has been proved to be true by your actions?

Next, *good witness must be consistent, not contradictory;* for, when a witness contradicts himself, his evidence is not regarded as of any value. So, if you say, "The gospel makes me holy," but you are caught in an act of cheating, or you lose your temper, or your talk is not clean, men will say, "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing, but which are we to believe?"

And, once more, *good testimony must be persistent, not variable;* for, if a man says one thing now, and another thing another time, you naturally say, "We never know where to find that fellow." That is the case with far too many professors; we do not know where to find them. On a Sunday, they are careful to carry a Bible and a hymn-book, but I have heard that, on a week day, they are more likely to have a pack of cards in their hand. On Sunday, it is, "Sing a hymn to Jesus;" but, on Monday, it is "Sing to anybody you like." On Sunday, it is, "Fear God;" but, on Monday, if it was not for the fear of the policeman, nobody knows what they might attempt. This will not do. If you are not consistent throughout your whole lives, if you are not all of a piece, I could almost wish that you were all the bad piece, because this mixture, this mingle-mangle, this Baal and Jehovah, this partly for God and partly for Mammon, this is the great mischief-making thing in the professing church to-day. Oh, that God would give us the grace to bear persistent, consistent, unvarying witness to the power of the gospel on our souls and in our lives!

To anyone who does not believe the gospel, I have this word to say. My friend, you have come in here to-night, and yet you are

not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the gospel true? Probably you reply, "Yes, I believe it is true." Well, then, if it be true, why do you not believe it? If Jesus Christ be true, why do you not believe him? The gospel tells you about your souls, about eternity, about heaven, about hell, about the only way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; then, if it be true, why do you not believe it? Why do you not see to it that your soul is right with God through believing in Jesus Christ? I should like to bring you to a point, so that you should say of the gospel, "I believe it," or, "I reject it."

Suppose you should reject it. Then you practically say that the apostles were liars,—that they bore testimony to a set of falsehoods; more than that, you are prepared to say that all the myriads of martyrs who died for the truth were fools, for they died in the defence of a fiction;—that they went to prison, and lost all things, and suffered every kind of ill treatment and torture for the sake of this gospel,—yet you say that they were fools, all of them, and that you are the one wise man who knows more than all of them. Well, we have only your word for that, and we are not so sure about it as you seem to be. Further, you are prepared to say that all of us, who declare that belief in Christ gave us peace of conscience, changed our lives, comforts our hearts, and supports us in sickness,—you say that we are all under a delusion. And your mother, when she died sweetly rejoicing in Christ,—was she deluded, too? And the little child, who died singing of Jesus, and who bade her father follow her to heaven, was she also deceived? Were these wrong? Were all these mistaken? And those of whom I have spoken, whom I have myself seen within this last week, of whose calmness and serenity on their death-beds I have testified to you, was that all a delusion? I should like you to say that to the little boy at the Orphanage; only I do not think that you would have the heart to do it; and if you did, it would not make any difference to him because he knows better.

If you were to tell me, when I eat my dinner, that I am not nourished by it, and that I do not enjoy it,—that it is only just an idea and a fancy,—well, you know, I should not argue with you, I should laugh at you; and I often feel inclined to laugh at unbelievers, only that I remember how much they are losing, and in what danger they stand; so my laughter turns to tears. Oh, that you would believe the gospel! It makes me happy, it makes me blessed; I cannot live without it, and I dare not die without it; and, blessed be God, I will not try either experiment, to live without it, or to die without it. No; I can still say,—

> "E'er since by faith I saw the stream
> His flowing wounds supply,
> Redeeming love has been my theme,
> And shall be till I die;"—

for I know that it is true. I have been with Jesus, and therefore I bear witness to him. Go and do likewise, only do it much better than I have done it, all you who have been with him, and God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 12—27.

Verse 12. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

O beloved, do keep this commandment! Overlook each other's infirmities. Bear with each other's faults. Love one another as Christ has loved us.

13—15. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

"I have explained myself to you in such a way that I have proved that you are my friends. A master sets his servant to work without explaining what his object is in that work, but I have explained to you what my Father's design is. Therefore, you are my friends."

16—21. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

We cannot expect, therefore, to receive honour, and to wear a crown of gold where Jesus wore a crown of thorns.

22—24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:*

They would have been comparatively free from sin.

24—26. *But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

Notice that blessed truth,—that even that Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, when he comes to visit us, has nothing better to speak of than our Lord Jesus Christ: "He shall testify of me." Even the Holy Spirit, when he exercises the function of the Comforter, testifies of Christ. Is he not the consolation of Israel? Well did the poet write:—

"Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of thee;
No music's like thy charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be."

27. *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—660, 980, 809.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 20TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 21st, 1880.

"So there was a division among the people because of him."—John vii. 43.

IT seems, then, that even when Christ was the preacher, there was a division among the hearers, so we must not be surprised if the same result follows from our preaching. No doubt, strife has sometimes been caused by a preacher's harshness of expression, or unwise utterances. He may have spoken unadvisedly, or provokingly; but if he did not, all would not be pleased; for even when Jesus spake as never man spake, all his hearers were not pleased. We truly say, "Many men, many minds;" and, therefore, even when Christ spake, "there was a division among the people because of him."

Nor was the division to be traced to the subject upon which Jesus was speaking at that time. There are some deep, mysterious subjects which seem calculated to stir up controversy; and you might say, "Whoever shall speak upon such a topic, even if the wise Solomon were to speak, he must create a division in any audience, if that should be his theme." But, in this case, with Christ for a speaker, the subject was himself. It was concerning him that the *schisma*—the schism occurred. There was a schism among the people, not concerning predestination or free will,—not concerning forms of church government,—not concerning the modes of observing the ordinances; but "*because of him.*"

So, then, we may not expect unanimity among mankind, whoever shall be the speaker, or whatever may be the subject of address. And I am not quite sure that this is a result that is altogether to be regretted. I have heard of a whole parish in which there were no religious bickerings because there was no religion; there were no religious strifes because nobody had anything worth striving for; and that is not a state of things over which I can rejoice. I dread the peace of the sepulchre far more than the battles of life. Life naturally makes a stir; it seems inevitable that it should do so; and it is better that men should think, even though they think

amiss, than that they should not think at all. I am not aware that the cattle in the fields have any diversity of judgment; it is no cause for wonder that there should be agreement where mind is absent. But it seems all but inevitable that, where there is mind, where there is thought, where weighty subjects are considered and discussed, there should be differences of opinion; and it is better that there should be those differences than that there should be the apathy, the indifference, the torpor of death.

And yet, my brethren, I am sorry that there should be any division among the people about the Lord Jesus Christ, because, if there is a point in which all mankind ought to have been agreed, it is concerning him who came to save men,—the unselfish One, who laid aside his robes of glory that he might take upon him our nature, our suffering, and our sin, so that he might redeem us from all our iniquities. There ought to have been only one opinion upon this subject,—"This is the Son of God; let us adore him. This is the Christ of God; let us trust him. This is our God, we have waited for him, let us rejoice and be glad in him." But it was not so: "There was a division among the people because of him;" and, to this day, the greatest division in the world is "*because of him.*"

I. I ask you to notice, first, that THERE WAS A DIVISION AMONG NON-BELIEVERS CONCERNING CHRIST. A large proportion of those who listened to Christ did not accept him as their Saviour; and, although they all agreed upon that point, there was a division among them concerning him.

First, *there were some who rejected his claims altogether*, and who even said, "He deceiveth the people." They went so far as to wish to lay violent hands upon him, and more than once we read that they took up stones to stone him; and we know that they did at last compass his death. In like manner, even to this day, there are some who utterly reject the claims of Jesus Christ. They seem as if they could not say anything too bitter and cruel concerning him. They will not have him to reign over them; in downright, terrible earnest, they reject him.

But all disbelievers are not so extreme in their opposition to Christ. We noticed, in reading the chapter, that *there are some who admit a portion of Christ's claims.* Some said, "He is a good man." Many said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet,"—the promised Messiah. They would not shut their eyes—they were too candid to do so,—to the goodness of his personal character, and to a certain grandeur about him which betokened that he was a prophet sent from God. They went so far as that, but they would go no further; and there are many in the present day who act in the same fashion.

There was a third class of persons who went further still. *They admitted Christ's claims, but neglected to follow out the legitimate consequences of them.* They said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" Others said, "This is the Christ." They were quite certain that he was the Messiah; and yet, when they had said that, they coolly went on their way, and took no more notice of him. They had made a truthful statement, but it did not in the least affect their conduct. Though

they believed Jesus to be anointed of God, they did not enrol themselves beneath his banner, or become obedient to his commands, or ask to be instructed in his doctrine. And, alas! we have a good many persons of that sort still in our midst. I suppose that most of the unconverted people here now are persons of that character. You do not deny the Scriptures; you believe in them. You do not doubt the Deity of Christ; you believe it. You do not question his atonement; you believe it. Some of you would not like to hear anything contrary to the doctrine which has been taught to you concerning him. If anyone were to preach error, you would at once say, "This is not the gospel, but another gospel, and we will not listen to it;" yet you have never accepted Christ to be your very own Saviour, you have never committed yourselves to his dear keeping; you have orthodox heads, but heterodox hearts.

It is still true, as it was in our Lord's day, that there is a division among the people because of him; and I ask you, who love the Saviour, as you look upon those who do not love him, to make a distinction between the one and the other of them. As for those who utterly reject him, pray for them. Do not expect them to love you if they do not love your Lord; and when they speak harshly concerning you, do not be astonished, for Jesus said to his disciples, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Do not get angry with them because they do not receive the Saviour, but pray for them, pity them, and love them with a love that will not give them up. Remember that the greatest force in the world is love; it is invincible. You can love a man to Christ, but you cannot bully him into salvation. I never heard of a soul that was scolded to the Saviour, but I have known many drawn to him by love; so love them, dear friends, keep on loving them more and more, until they shall be brought to feel that the love of God shed abroad in your heart has reached their hearts also.

As for those who are prepared to go part of the way with Christ, aid them all you can. If they have not all the light you could wish them to have, be thankful that they have any, and tell them that no man, who acts honestly up to the light he has, will be left in the dark. If a man has a dozen errors beclouding the truth which he sincerely believes, if he is only a true man, he will come out right. I have often conversed with persons who have been as wrong as wrong can be; but they did not mean to be wrong. They had an earnest desire to know the truth if they could find it, and they had an earnest wish to live that truth, too. I am always hopeful about such persons. You remember that our Lord Jesus said, concerning his Father, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." It is the same now; if anyone is desirous to act according to the mind of God, light will come to him sooner or later, and he shall discover the true doctrine of Christ. Try and help him to discover it. Quietly, lovingly, point him to the Son of God, and rest not content till he finds his Saviour.

As for those who do believe everything about Christ, but yet do not savingly rely upon Christ himself, O my friends, what shall we say concerning these people? We have brought them to the water of life, but we cannot make them drink. We put the bread of life before them, but we cannot make them eat of it. It behoves us to weep in secret concerning our fellow-seatholders, and those who come here constantly, or who go to other places of worship where Christ is preached, and who say of what they hear, "It is all true," yet they do not receive it in their hearts. O my hearer, out of your own mouth you will be condemned at the last, because you will not be able to say, "I did not know the way of salvation," for you do know it. You will not be able to say, "I did not accept the Bible as true," for you know it is true, and yet you do not take the practical step that ought to follow as the result of that knowledge. May the Lord, in his infinite mercy, lead you to take it this very hour! If you do not take it, you will be convicted—self-convicted at the bar of God. I must not spend more time, however, over this part of the subject; but you can all see that there was a division among the non-believers concerning Christ.

II. But now, secondly, THERE WAS ALSO A DIVISION OF BELIEVERS FROM NON-BELIEVERS.

There were some who did really and savingly take Christ to be theirs, and "there was a division among the people" on that account, and what a division that always is! How deep it is! How wide it is! Between the poorest saint and the brightest moralist, there is a great gulf; we may not be able to perceive it in the outward character, but there is as deep a gulf as there is between the feeblest form of life and death,—a gulf which only omnipotent grace can cause any man to pass over. The radical difference between the true believer and the unbeliever lies in their relation to Christ. That is the point of divergence: "There was a division among the people because of him."

For, first, *to the unbeliever, Christ is nothing; but to the believer, Christ is everything.* To the unbeliever, a mere opinion about Christ is everything. To the true believer, the saving knowledge of Christ has covered up all mere opinions concerning him. He knows Christ, and lives in him, and Christ also lives in him.

Look at the difference between the believer and the unbeliever *in the matter of trusting Christ.* The non-believer trusts in himself, or in his own works, or in his priest if he is a Romanist or Ritualist; but the true Christian trusts in Christ wholly and alone. There is one thing concerning myself about which I am perfectly sure. When I pass myself through many forms of self-examination, I tremble as I do it, lest I should deceive myself; but about this one matter I know that I am not deceived,—I have not the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a confidence as to my ultimate salvation except in Jesus Christ alone. And one reason why I dare not have any confidence except in him, is that I do not know anything I ever did, or ever thought, or ever was, in which I could confide; so I am driven to trust in him, and in him alone. I lie at the foot of his cross because I cannot stand upright; I must do that, for, like

Luther, I can do no other. If I search myself and my whole life over and over again, I cannot see anything but what I call a filthy rag, and I fling it all away; good works and bad works—so far as mine are concerned, are not worth the trouble of sorting out; so I tie them all up in one bundle, and pitch them overboard, and just cling to the ever-blessed lifebuoy of the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. That is what a believer does; he trusts Christ, and the unbeliever does not; and that difference between them makes a division among the people.

The same difference is apparent in the matter of *love to Christ.* The true believer loves his Lord. He is no fiction to us,—no mere historic personage about whom we read, but of whom we think little or nothing. We love him; the very sound of his name has music in it to us. Some seek their pleasure in the world, but the Christian man does not. If he is obliged to go into the world, he is glad to get out of it very soon. While he is with worldlings, he says, "There is nothing here to suit me;" but let him have his Master's company for half an hour alone, no matter where, and he says, "This is to me a foretaste of the bliss of heaven." Rest assured, dear friends, that where your pleasure is, there your heart is. If you find your pleasure in the world, your heart is in the world, and you are to be reckoned among the worldly; but if Christ is your joy, your pleasure, your delight, your very heaven, then there is a difference between you and worldlings.

Further, those who know Christ, and trust him, and love him, *differ in character from worldlings*, for those who truly know Christ seek to be like him. They take him to be their copy, and try to imitate every line, each down-stroke and up-stroke; but he who knows not Christ takes any model that he pleases, and aims not at copying the excellence of Jesus, and thus again there is "a division among the people because of him."

This division is also shown *in the gradual development of different characters.* You may be at a railway station,—an important junction, it may be; there are two lines of rails that run parallel to each other. There is a point, a little distance off, where they begin to diverge, one going to the East, and the other to the West. They will be many miles apart before long; but, at first, how slight is the division! So is it with those who begin life side by side. Two young men may be very much alike, and for years you may scarcely see any difference between them; but, after a while, the ungodly man develops in his way, and the lover of Christ develops in his way. You see them when they have reached middle life; you see them, perhaps, on their dying bed; at what a vast distance they are from one another! What a difference there is between them with respect to Christ! One knows him as his Saviour and All-in-all; the other knows nothing of him. One rejoices in him; the other despises him. One is triumphing in the thought that he will wake up in his Lord's likeness; the other lies down to die moaning that he is "without hope." In such cases, truly there is a difference among the people because of Christ.

But what a difference there will be among the people *in their*

eternal destiny! By-and-by, they will awake, and arise; the judgment-seat will be occupied, and Christ the Judge will sit upon his throne. He is the man upon whom wicked men once spat; but his countenance shall be bright as the sun in that day. He is the man whom they scourged; but then he will sway the sceptre of universal sovereignty, and the unnumbered myriads of our race will all stand before him. What an assembly that will be when before him are gathered all nations! They will crowd the land, and throng the very mountain tops, and stand upon the ocean as upon a sea of glass. What a multitude! But there will be one thing that will divide them, and that will be "a division among the people because of him." Do you hear the songs and shouts of the ransomed? Louder than ten thousand thunders, do you hear them? They are clapping their hands; they are shouting, "Welcome, welcome, Son of God!" The archangel's trumpet seems to them, as they wake up from the dead, to be the morning summons that calls them up from beds of dust and silent clay to joy and peace eternal; and every note, as it peals out, is one to which they can sing, and they chant in harmony with it the great anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." But what other sounds do I hear amidst those thunders of applause, and that mighty chorus of the redeemed? Hark! sharp and shrill, there come up cries that pierce the very firmament,—terrible sounds that even the glad music of that grand morning hymn cannot wholly drown. I can hear it, though the archangel's trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, for myriads of lost souls have risen from the tomb, and they are wailing, wailing, wailing, "*because of him*" whom they rejected; and above all other sounds there comes up the awful cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" There will indeed be a division among the people because of him in that tremendous day. On which side of the King will you be then, my dear hearer? I pray you to answer that question in the quietude of your chamber this very night. Where will you be when Christ shall make the final division between all the vast masses of the human race, "and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats"? Will you be driven to the left hand, among the goats, with the King's curse thundering in your ear; or will you be gathered with those upon his right hand, and join with them in singing the hymns of angels and of men redeemed, to whom Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"?

III. I cannot give more time to that solemn theme, for I must close my discourse with a brief reference to one other topic which arises out of the text. We have considered the division among the unbelievers "because of him," and the division between believers and unbelievers. Now, in the last place, I want to show you that, WHEN FAITH COMES, UNITY IS PRODUCED.

Is there any division among believers because of Christ? Is there "a division among the people"—the people of the Lord—because of him? No, beloved. Christ is the cause of the greatest division, but he is also the medium of the greatest union. No force in the world splits as does Christ's battle-axe. He himself said, "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And it is wonderful how families have been divided, and how communities and even nations have been divided by the coming of Christ. Those who loved and served him would follow him at all costs, and those who would not have him rejected him with the utmost fury. There are some people in this world who are like the chip in the porridge, there is no flavour in them, they are of little or no account; but my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not one of that sort. You must either love him or hate him; you must give a verdict for him or against him; you cannot be indifferent; he himself puts the matter thus: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." You are, at this moment, either Christ's friend or his foe; you cannot be neutral.

Yet, while Christ is the great cause of division, it is also true that he is the great means of union. There is nothing that welds men together as the love of Christ does; it is the most potent force in the universe for gathering together those who are scattered abroad, and making them truly one. *In Christ, nationalities are blended.* Think of the division between the Jew and the Gentile; what can make them one, but Christ? He breaks down the middle wall of partition, and unites them. Look at Peter, that stiff, unbending Jew; he never ate of an unclean animal, and he never means to do so. He is on the top of the house, praying at noonday, and is very hungry; he hears the command, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat;" and there is let down before him a great sheet full of all manner of strange creatures, but Peter has never touched anything of the kind. He does not like such fare; but, by-and-by, he learns the meaning of the vision. There were certain Gentiles on the way to him, and he was to go with them, and to preach Christ to all who were assembled in the house of Cornelius; and he must eat and drink with the uncircumcised; and, taught of the Spirit, Peter does it, and Paul does it. Never, I pray you, speak disrespectfully of a Jew. The grandest man who ever lived was a Jew; Christ our Lord was himself of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham. Glory be to God, the Jews shall be brought in with the Gentiles; but they are the old original branches of the good olive tree, and they shall be grafted in again. It is unbelief that has caused them to be cast out; but I am sure that every man, who truly loves Christ, feels that to him there is neither Jew nor Gentile now, that feud is ended once for all, for all believers are one in Christ.

So, too, wherever Christ comes, there are no foreigners. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers

and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Tell me that a man is a Christian,—I do not care to what nationality he belongs, he may be a Dutchman, he may come from Zululand, he may be an Afghan, he may be a Hindoo,—it does not matter what he is so long as he loves Christ. What more do I want than that? He is my brother, whatever is the colour of his skin. He is near akin to me if he is akin to Christ; and all genuine Christians feel that it is so. May there be more and more of this fellow-feeling among believers, for Christ Jesus our Lord has no division among his people as to blacks and whites, race and caste; that is ended once for all.

And, truly, wherever Christ is known in his saving power, there is a wonderful uniting force among all genuine Christians. Look at Pentecost: "All that believed were together, and had all things common." They loved each other so much that, if one was poor, his rich brothers helped him. They felt as if they were all fused into one body by the intense heat of love to Christ; and there are many, many, many similar cases now, (I speak what I do know,) in which believers have received help and succour, which they never would have had if it had not been for the name and love of Christ. Many of you here know that there is much true Christian love in the world; and you could speak of it if it were the time to do so, but these things are not to be blazed abroad.

In Christ, *personal peculiarities cease to divide.* We do love each other; let us love one another more and more, "for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Did you ever notice how true Christian workers love each other? When there is little doing for Christ, a man tries to get all the fish he can into his own net. He says, "We must get the people inside our chapel,—try and make Baptists of them, or Wesleyans;" but if ever the Spirit of God comes with mighty power, they begin to beckon to their neighbours, who are in the other ship, to come and help them because their boat will not hold all the fish; and they forget all their little differences in the one grand point of unity, for all are agreed about Christ. Notice what happens in a real, earnest prayer-meeting. Christians do not agree about everything; perhaps we never shall; possibly it is well that we never should, or else we might make a great big church, and have a pope over it, and do nobody knows how much harm. We are sometimes best apart; some people love one another all the better because they do not all live in the same house. Sometimes, it is a cause of disagreement when two or three sets of husbands and wives, who are related to each other, come to live under the same roof. But you get together a number of people who love Christ, and set them praying. What was that brother who prayed just now? He was a Wesleyan. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a Calvinistic prayer! Who was that last brother that prayed? He was a Strict Baptist. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a prayer that was full of generosity and Christian love! Here is another; who is he? He is an Independent, I should say. How do I know that? Why, because his prayer was so full of

dependence on Christ, and trust in him. We can sometimes even fight with one another for what we believe to be the truth, and rebuke each other to the face if we think there is an error; but when it comes to Christ and his dear cross, give me thy hand, brother. You are washed in the blood, and so am I. You are resting in Christ, and so am I. You have put all your hope in Jesus; and that is where all my hope is, and therefore we are one. Yes, there is no real division among the true people of God because of Christ.

Let us try, moreover, to make the world see that it is so by everyone endeavouring to magnify Jesus more than his neighbour does. Let there be no strife, except to see which can deny himself most for Jesus, which can labour most for Jesus, which can lift the grace of Jesus higher than others.

And, oh! *what unity there will be in heaven*, where Christ will be the centre of the redeemed, where all shall sing of him, and where all shall equally behold him! All of us, who believe in Jesus, will be with him where he is, and so we shall behold his glory, the glory which his Father gave him. Certain brethren think that they will have a place all to themselves. Well, they have not been very amiable down here, and therefore I should not be sorry if they were going to have a place to themselves; but, at the same time, I pray the Lord to have mercy upon them, and to enable them to give up all idea of having a place for themselves, and all thought of having anything different from the rest of the Lord's family, for I do believe that there will be no division among the people of God because of Christ, or concerning the glory that Christ will give them; but they shall all for evermore behold him, and for evermore call him theirs, and rejoice in him world without end. I am quite satisfied to share the lot of the poorest of his people; and if there is a saint in heaven who has to sit by the door, I will sit with him for ever; and if I shall have a right—as I am sure I shall not,—to a higher and a better place than he has, I will ask my Master to let me sit among the lowliest of his servants, and I am sure that you, brethren and sisters, will add, "And so say all of us." Let others say what they like, I feel certain that there will be no division among the people of God in heaven because of Christ; to whom be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN VII. 14—53.

Verse 14. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*

He was no coward, so he boldly showed himself in the midst of the throng in the temple.

15. *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*

Or, "How knoweth he the Scriptures? How has he come to be an instructed man, having never learned of the Rabbis? He has never passed through our schools of learning, so what can he know?"

16. *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

"I am not the inventor of what I say; I am but a messenger, delivering the message of him that sent me."

17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Any man, who is seeking after that which is right, and labouring to do that which is right, is a good judge of the truth. A practical life of godliness makes a man a far better critic as to what truth is than all the learning of the schools can do.

18. *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*

If you ever hear a man speaking about the priesthood, meaning himself and his brethren; and about the Church, again meaning himself and his brethren; and about the sacraments, meaning certain performances by himself and his brethren; you may know at once that God did not send him. But he who speaks to the glory of God, and does not say, "Behold me;" but, "Behold the Lamb of God," he it is whom God has sent.

19. *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*

"Did not Moses say, 'Thou shalt not kill'? Then, you do not keep his law, though you profess such reverence for him, for, if you did, you would not go about to kill me."

20, 21. *The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

"I did it on the Sabbath day, and you are all stumbling at that."

22, 23. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?*

Surely, there was never a more triumphant answer than that.

24, 25. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?*

Perhaps some of the same people who had asked Christ, "Who goeth about to kill thee?" now enquired, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?"

26, 27. *But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.*

They had a notion—perhaps derived from that passage in Isaiah, "who shall declare his generation?"—that the birth of Christ would be hidden in mystery. At any rate, there was some cloudy idea floating about that it would be concealed.

28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am:*

"And yet you do not know me."

28—30. *And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*

Something seemed to hold them back. Enraged as they were against

him, a mysterious and mighty awe was upon them, so that they dared not touch him

31—33. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them,—*

As they came to take him;—perhaps to the very officers sent by the Pharisees, Jesus said,—

33. *Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

"You may well let me alone now, for it will only be a little while, and then I shall be delivered into your hands, and you will no more be troubled with me."

34, 35. *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?*

That was always their fear. "Is he going to the Greeks? Will he be a teacher to them? Will he try to introduce them into the mysteries of our faith?"

36, 37. *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried,—*

I think I see him standing up in the midst of the great throng. That congregation would soon be scattered, never to come together again; so he stood up in the most prominent place he could find, and, notwithstanding all their anger, and their desire to kill him, he cried,—

37, 38. *Saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly—*

Or, "out of the very midst of him"—

38. *Shall flow rivers of living water.*

What a glorious gospel sermon that was! It comes to us down through the ages, and is as true now as when Jesus spake it. Ho, thirsty ones, come ye to him, and drink; and he will slake your thirst, and create in you a well of living water which shall bubble up for ever and ever.

39, 40. (*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*) *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

The Prophet about whom Moses spoke.

41. *Others said, This is the Christ.*

The Messiah.

41, 42. *But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

This was blessed testimony even out of the mouth of Christ's enemies. They objected against Christ what was indeed the fact, for he did come of the seed of David, and from the town of Bethlehem. There was he born; and though they called him the Nazarene,—and he refused not the title,—though over his head Pilate wrote, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet is he the Son of David, and his birthplace was at Bethlehem, though some of them knew it not.

43, 44. *So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

He was immortal till his work was done. The hour for his death had not yet struck, and he must live on till the appointed time.

45, 46. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

The charm of his eloquence, the dignity of his person, his awe-inspiring demeanour, and a singular something,—they knew not what,—that Divinity that doth hedge about such a King as he was,—restrained their hands. They said, "Never man spake like this man."

47. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?*

"You sheriffs' officers are generally hard-hearted enough; are you also deceived?"

48. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

This was as much as to say, "If we have not believed on him,—we who are the great dons of the nation,—the rulers and the Pharisees,—why, then, there cannot be anything in his claims. Just as some people seem to think that, unless there is a lord in a Society, unless there is an honourable somebody or other in the chair, there is nothing in it.

49. *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*

They regarded the poor, common people as ignorant and accursed, whereas they, probably, knew as much about the law and the real spirit of it as these learned teachers did.

50. *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)*

Being a member of the council,—

51. *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

He only asked a question, that was all; and, timid Christian, if you are placed where you cannot say much for Christ, if you have too great a fear upon you to vindicate your Master at any considerable length, yet say what you can; and, perhaps, the simple asking of a question may suffice to defend him. Nicodemus did but rise, and ask, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

52. *They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

Which was a lie, for prophets had come out of Galilee. Still, they denied it; and they were indignant at having such a question put to them by Nicodemus.

53. *And every man went unto his own house.*

It was like a bombshell exploding in the midst of them; and, often, a few brave words dropped into the midst of an assembly of bad men will explode among them, and scatter them hither and thither. Nicodemus had accomplished what, perhaps, he thought he should never do. He was indeed like his name on that occasion,—one of the conquering people,—for "every man went unto his own house." Nicodemus had scattered them all by his startling question. May each of us as bravely witness for Christ as we have opportunity!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—427, 804, 388.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SIGHT OF INIQUITY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 27TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, during the winter of 1858—9.

"Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?"—Habakkuk i. 3.

IN this discourse, it will be my endeavour to assign some reasons why God causes his people to see iniquity in themselves and in others.

I. We will begin with the first class, and enquire, WHY DOES GOD CAUSE US TO SEE INIQUITY IN OURSELVES? What is the reason of the discoveries, which the Holy Spirit sometimes makes to us, of the evil of our hearts? It is well known, to all who love the Lord, that there are seasons when the Holy Spirit takes us into the darkest chambers of our being, and there reveals to us evils which, perhaps, we had never suspected. "Son of man," saith he, "I will show thee what great abominations there are within thee." He lays bare the loathsome kennel of the human heart, and lets us look at all our deformity and depravity; he takes us to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged. He bids us look with horror upon our natural state, and see that awful and hideous corruption that still remaineth in our hearts, even though we have been regenerated by him. Why doth he do this? We will answer the question in several ways.

Sometimes, he does it *to confirm us in the doctrines of grace.* My brethren, Arminianism is the natural religion of us all. I think one of the surest ways in the world to put down all our self-sufficiency, and all our erroneous views of the gospel, is for God the Holy Spirit to show us our own depravity. A man may talk glibly concerning free will as long as he knows nothing about himself; but when the Lord has shown him what he is by nature, he will say no more about that matter; or if he talks about it as a mere theory, he will not believe it in his inmost spirit. A man, untaught of the Spirit, says that sinners, of their own free will, turn to God; he says that they do, by their own strength, at least to a great degree, though assisted by the Holy Spirit, keep them-

selves; and that, to some extent, their final perseverance is dependent on their own diligence, and is not left entirely in the hands of God. But I am sure that, if the Spirit takes him into the secret chambers of his heart, and lets him see his own iniquity, he may go in talking about his own free will, but he will come out singing of God's free grace; for he will say, "O Lord, if thou hadst not begun the good work in me, it never could have originated in such a filthy pool as my heart; and if thou dost not carry on the work from first to last, it will soon come to a standstill. If I am not robed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must stand naked before thy bar; and if the work be not entirely thine own, or if thou art to be turned away by any sin or sinfulness in the creature, then, O Lord, I know I must perish!" And this right view of the subject will drive him to believe in discriminating grace, in irresistible vocation, in omnipotent keeping, and in the infallible perseverance of all the children of God.

It is noteworthy how the belief of one of the doctrines of grace naturally leads to the belief of all the rest. The system of the gospel is so logical, its truths fit so well into one another, that you cannot get a right knowledge of one of them without, at once, or in a very short time, discovering the others. The Lord begins by teaching us this foundation truth of our utter depravity; he burns it into our conscience by bitter experience, and by terrible discoveries of our sinfulness; and he knows right well that the other doctrines will follow, and that, when this truth is really understood by us, we shall not be long before we have orthodox views of the whole covenant of grace, and the great system of the gospel of Jesus. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord gives his people revelations of their own iniquity and defilement, that they may be sound in the faith, and may believe nothing but the doctrines of grace.

Moreover, I believe that he does this *to keep them humble.* If our Master did not sometimes let us have a look at ourselves, we should be fearfully proud. The old Puritans used to say that God has given the peacock black feet, that he may not be proud of his bright feathers; and that, in like manner, he has allowed his people to have the black feet of their own sinfulness, that they may not glory in any of the graces which God the Holy Spirit has given them; but that, while they have those graces, so bright and beautiful, they may still look down on their own natural depravity, and humble themselves before God. We are all, by nature, as proud as Lucifer. If any man thinks himself to be incapable of pride, he is very proud indeed. "Ah!" says one, "I know I never can be flattered." But, sir, you flatter yourself to an extraordinary degree when you say that. Pride is natural to us all; it is woven into the warp and woof of our being; we shall never get rid of it, till the worm has eaten up our flesh; nothing will ever cover up our pride except our winding-sheets; and when our bodies are wrapped up in them, and our souls are caught up to dwell with God, then, but not till then, shall pride be thoroughly cast out of us. Our communion with Christ, our progress towards heaven, our

increased knowledge, our good works, all these things have, through the evil heart of our unbelief, a tendency to puff us up, though, in truth, being all given to us by the Spirit, there is no legitimate cause for pride in any of us; and therefore, God, to keep his people in their right place, humbles them with discoveries of their own sinfulness. If their ships had all sail, and no ballast, they would soon be wrecked; so, when God fills his people with abundant revelations, he sends them also a thorn in the flesh; and the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet them, that they may walk humbly with God, and bow their heads in submission before him, knowing themselves to be still unclean, apart from the work of Christ Jesus their Lord, which he has wrought out for them.

Beloved, you can bear me witness that, when you have had sad discoveries of your own heinous guilt, you have been deeply humbled. Sometimes, your good works have been a great evil to you, because you have prided yourself upon them, and so brought yourself to the edge of the precipice of presumption. But manifestations of your guilt, brought home to your conscience by God's Spirit, have been of essential service to you, by teaching you not to be high-minded, but rather to fear, and to remember that your standing in grace is not of yourself, and therefore you must not boast. That is another good reason, if there were no other, why we may bless God for showing us our own iniquity.

A third reason why God sometimes shows his people their own wickedness is, *to make them submissive in the hour of trouble.* A Pharisee, of all people in the world, would be the worst man to be in Job's position. If I must be in a hospital, I would rather be there as a publican, than as a Pharisee. For a Pharisee, nothing would be good enough; he would think his pangs and miseries great indeed for so righteous a man to have to endure; he would think he had no right to suffer. But the poor publican would say, "I am a great sinner, and these miseries are not a millionth part of what I deserve to suffer; these aches and pains are nothing compared with what I merit at the hand of God; therefore I will bear them all with submission. Why should a living man complain? I am still out of hell, and therefore I must not murmur." Ah! brethren, we have a great difficulty to keep murmuring down. There is very much meaning in that old English word murmur; just sound it,—it is *mur-mur.* Any child can say that; it is one of the easiest words to speak; and that is why, I think, we have that word for complaining and grumbling, because murmuring is such a very easy thing; anyone can murmur, anyone can grumble, anyone can complain. Murmuring seems to have been bred in the bones of the children of Israel; for, in the wilderness, they were almost always murmuring;—murmuring for water when they were thirsty, murmuring for bread, then murmuring for meat, murmuring because the Anakims were tall; murmuring first for one thing, and then for another; they were always at it; they were continually murmuring for forty long years in the wilderness. Ay, and many of us are all too apt to imitate them; but the surest way to cure us of murmuring is to let us know our own ill-desert. A man, who

has been taught to realize his own wickedness, and his own ill-desert, will be less likely to murmur than anyone else. The poor wretch, who has had the rope round his neck, and has been ready to be hanged, when he gets his pardon, and goes his way, you will not find him murmuring at the fare that is provided for him. He will say, "Oh! it is such a wonder to me to be alive at all, it is such an act of mercy that I have had my life spared, that this dry bread becomes like royal dainties, and this cup of cold water tastes to me like the richest wine might do to another man." The Lord does thus often take his children into the stripping-room, and into the starving-room, and lets them see that all their afflictions are less than they deserve, that their troubles are but as the small dust of the balance, compared with the mountains of tribulation and anguish which they deserve to have received in hell.

Again, when the Lord reveals to us our iniquity, it is *to put us on our watch-tower*. When he shows us the sin that is in our heart, it is like a captain pointing to a few skirmishers who have just come before an army that is advancing. "There, my men," says the captain, "you see those soldiers; they are the advance guard of the enemy; look sharply after them, for there is a great army behind them, so be on your watch." Thus the Holy Spirit discovers to us our evil desires and corruptions, he wakes us up to see them; and when we have seen them, he says to us, "Take care; this little that I have shown you is to warn you of a great army that is behind. These few evil ones that have just appeared to your vision are but the outriders of a host of black things that are ready to attack you; so, be always upon your watch-tower, be constantly looking out for foes." I think that soldiers need to have a few alarms on their march; if they had none, they might become careless, and relax discipline; and then they might be enticed into a defile, and so be surprised, and cut off. But when they have a few enemies to harass them on the flank and rear, they are more likely to be watchful, and to keep a sharp look-out, so that, in case of a sudden attack, they would be ready to repel the foe. The absence of enemies is apt to breed a slothfulness which disables; and times of ease seldom suit God's soldiers. Holidays ruined the army of Hannibal; and it is for our good that God stirs up the Amalekites to make us ready for the battle, lest we should be surprised by even worse adversaries.

I will give only one more answer to this first question, and then I will pass to the other point. The Lord often shows us our iniquity, *to make us value salvation all the more*. You know that the man, who thinks the most of a doctor, is generally the man who needs him most. When we are well, we often make jokes concerning doctors; we talk about their killing the people, and so on; but when we get ill, we send for them. We laugh at them while in health; but we are glad to make use of them when sick. So is it with the Lord's people; they may, perhaps, think lightly of Christ when they do not see or feel any present need for him; but when they discover their own leprosy, then it is that they value the great Physician. When they realize their own ruin, then it is that they

prize the God-given remedy. It is a great service to us, sometimes, to show us our bankrupt's schedule. Every man has had a bankrupt's schedule, because we are all bankrupts by nature. We set up in trade for ourselves, and we soon became bankrupts; we never paid even a farthing in the pound, but our Lord Jesus Christ paid it all for us; yet we should not know how great was his grace in doing so, did he not remind us of our debts, and of how very poor were our own hopes of meeting debts so immense, so infinitely beyond all our powers to discharge. God says to his children, "I brought you out of prison, but you do not think much of my deliverance to-day; so I will take you back to prison, and let you see once more what kind of place it is, and then you will think more of the Breaker who broke your chains, and set you free. I have opened a fountain that sparkles with living water; you have been drinking of it day by day, till you are full, and you do not know its value. Come, I will put you in the waste, howling wilderness, and you shall suffer the pangs of hunger, you shall have all the water in your bottle spent, and then you will know the preciousness of the rippling fountain which grace hath opened for thirsty sinners. You have been feasting every day at my table, you have scarcely known what hunger is; I will just put you again in the desert of conviction, and make you hunger after righteousness, and then you will prize the bread that came down from heaven, and think more of Jesus Christ, my Son, than you would have done had it not been for this showing of iniquity and grievance."

All these things, of which I have spoken, are matters of heart experience to all true believers. Many persons do not know the plague of their heart. But you, who love the Lord, will own that, however quaintly I have put these things, there is great truth in them. It is even so; we have had very solemn times, all of us who believe in Jesus, since we first knew the Lord; there have been times when we could not tell our right hand from our left in spiritual matters; when, if anyone had asked us, "Are you the Lord's?" we dared not have answered, "Yes, we are;" for our corruptions were so strong, and unbelief had become so rampant, and poor faith seemed to be so slumbering, like the fire in the ashes, that we could not tell whether there was any fire or not. O brethren, do we not remember when we have sometimes knelt down in anguish, and cried, "O Lord, I long to have this point decided,—am I thine, or am I not? If it be so, why am I thus? Why this wrestling of two armies in the Shulamite? Why is it that these contentions and these warrings are carried on in my spirit? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and why my sin contends with me. O Lord, show me where I am vile;" and have we not found that these times of sore conflict have been of essential benefit to us? We have grown strong by these griefs; the sight of iniquity has made us wiser, more cautious, more prudent, more humble, more affectionate, and made us more firm in our belief in our Saviour afterwards, than we had ever been before.

II. Now I will try to answer the question of the text in another

sense: "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" Sometimes, the iniquity and grievance are not in ourselves, but IN OTHERS. Some of you may not have much of this world's goods; you, perhaps, live in a house where there are very ungodly people; down in your court, the Sabbath is always broken; in the street where you reside, you seldom hear anything on the Sabbath day except oaths, and curses, and profanity, and everything which constitutes a breach of the day of rest; and others of you, by your very connections, are called to mix with evil companions, whose speech, instead of being seasoned with salt, seems seasoned with brimstone, flavoured only with blasphemy, and having perpetually in it the very brogue of hell. There are some of you, who are called to labour with workmen, who, instead of endeavouring to help you to heaven, seem trying, like Christian's neighbours and wife, of whom you read in "The Pilgrim's Progress," to pull you back to the City of Destruction. You are, perhaps, asking this question, "O Lord, why am I in such a condition? Why has thy providence put me where I am thrown into contact with evil men? 'Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?'" I will tell you three or four reasons why the Lord acts thus towards you.

The first is, *to let you see what you might yourselves have been.* John Bradford—you have probably heard the story a hundred times,—when he used to see people going past his window, on the way to Tyburn, to be hanged, said, "There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God; if it had not been for the grace of God, John Bradford too would have been hanged." When you hear men swearing, you can say, "That is what I should have done, if the Lord had not kept the door of my lips." When you see men taken up for robbery, you can say, "That is what I might have been, if God had not kept me from sin." When you hear of the drunken brawl, or the murderous affray, put your hand on your heart, and say, "Ah! the same sort of evils might have come out of this heart of mine; for human hearts are very much alike. 'As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.' There is not much difference, by nature, between one heart and another; so, that man is a picture of what I might have been, if the restraining hand of God had not kept me back from sin." You know that, sometimes, drunkards help to make men sober; occasionally, drunkards are good apostles of temperance; for, when they come reeling through the streets, in all their bestial stupidity, a man very naturally says, "What a fool that fellow makes of himself!" and it leads him to say, "I must avoid that evil thing, because I would not make myself so foolish as he is." I think it was the old Greek lords who used to make their slaves drunk, in order to keep their children from the vice, by letting them see how disgraceful a drunkard looked.

Thus, perhaps, God allows wicked men to come in our way, *to make us see the evil of sin, that we may turn from it, pass by it, abhor it, and not indulge in it.* I have no doubt that the wickedness of men may be employed, under the divine wisdom, and the overruling

hand of God, for the sanctification of his own people. Just as, sometimes, a book that is full of bad orthography is one of the best things for teaching a child how to spell well, by leading him to correct the mistakes in spelling, so the Lord permits us to see this other kind of bad spelling in order to teach us how to spell aright. We have to correct ourselves by the evils of others, and to learn from their wrong-doing to avoid the sins into which they have fallen. Wrecks may sometimes be made into beacons; the ruin of one man may be a warning to another. It is so with the Christian, for he knows how to use his sight of iniquity, and of grievance, as he beholds it in others, as a reason for avoiding the same iniquity himself.

In the next place, God sometimes allows us to see the sins of others, *to teach us to admire his sovereignty*, which plucked us as brands from the burning. We look at our neighbours, and see them drinking down sin as a greedy ox drinketh down water, and we say, "What hath made us to differ from them?" Grace—free grace. And then we ask, "Why has grace come to us, and not to them? Why have these favours been given to us, and not to the rest of mankind?" And we are obliged to say, with Christ, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." When only one member of a family is converted, what a proof that is of divine sovereignty! When there is a holy mother, with an ungodly husband, and wicked children, what an illustration that is of the sovereignty of God, in that one is taken, and the others are left! And when, in a house, two women have been grinding at the mill, and one has accompanied her grinding with the songs of Zion, and the other has accompanied hers with the voice of cursing, what a proof there has been of the sovereignty of God, who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Ay, Christian, God hath put thee in the very midst of sin, to make his grace the more conspicuous. If you ride in the country, and you see a field of wheat, you will very likely not notice one of the ears at all; but as you are going along, you see a hedge, and, by some chance or other, a grain of wheat has been dropped into the ground under the hedge, and from it a single ear of corn has grown up through the brambles, and there it stands alone. Very likely you nudge your friend who is riding with you, and say, "There is an ear of wheat growing up among the brambles." It seems the more astonishing and notable from the place where it is growing. So, I think, a Christian in the Church of Christ is not a thing to be wondered at so much. The sovereignty of God is not so much seen amongst the righteous by themselves as it is when we find the Christians growing up amid the bushes and brambles of an ungodly world, and proving themselves to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Who ever noticed glow-worms in the day time? But, in the night, you will see them shining among the leaves. They were there by day, I daresay, but nobody saw them; but, in the night, with their little lamps glowing, everyone admires them. So

the Christian, when he is in good company, is a blessed man, and a great instance of divine love; but when, in the order of providence, he is put into a dark place, where there is little of gospel light and truth, then it is that his lamp begins to be most useful, and he is more noticed than he ever was before. This is why the Lord sometimes puts his people there, to make his sovereignty, his power, his might, and his grace, the more apparent. Even as men sometimes set jewels in foils to show their brightness, and put dark spots in their picture to make the lights more apparent, so the Lord, in his providence, permits his people sometimes to sojourn in evil places; like Lot, to dwell in Sodom; and like Abraham, to go down among the Egyptians, or with the Philistines, in order that divine grace may be displayed, and the Lord's name may be exalted.

I have another answer, and, I think, a better one, to the question of the text: "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" Why, my brethren, God shows us the sin of our fellow-men, *that we may set more earnestly to work, and that we may be the means of saving souls and extending the kingdom of righteousness.* When a captain takes his soldiers out to look at the enemy, it is like what I heard of a celebrated Scotchman, whose words I am scarcely able to pronounce correctly. "Now, lads," he said, "there they are; if ye dinna kill them, they'll kill you." That was their choice, and so it is with us. God brings us to walk in this city, where harlotry and vice are to be seen on every side, almost at noonday. Now then, soldiers of the cross, if ye dinna kill them, they'll kill you. If you do not stand up for your Master, and keep the banner of the cross in the air, the enemy will be more than a match for you. I have been struck sometimes, when I have looked in a window, and seen there pamphlets full of all manner of obscenity and infidelity and wickedness, and they have had the most blessed effect upon my mind; for I have thought, "Well, if there is so much wickedness, so much the more reason is there why every minister should be in earnest, and why every Christian should seek with all his might to do good."

Some of you live in very nice villas in the country; you do not go among the poor people, and you do not know what they are like. If you were to walk through some of the back slums and narrow alleys of London, you would say, "Oh, I never thought there could have been such places upon earth!" and if you could go where I have sometimes gone, up an old creaking staircase, where you have to stoop your head for fear of hitting it against a beam, and go into a room, and see a whole family there; and go into another room, and see a whole family there; a little further, and see another family, all crowded and packed together; and then hear their language, and see their utter ignorance of everything concerning Christ, almost as unenlightened as the Hottentots in their kraals in Africa;—you would go away after seeing them, and say, "There is great reason that we should all be in earnest. We ought to be up and doing, sirs; we ought to be working well for our Master, after such a sight as this!" Oh! but we cover up our iniquity in this land a great deal; we fringe all London with fine

streets, so that, when a foreigner rides through them, he says, "What a grand city it is!" A varnished hypocrisy! What is there behind those streets? What will you find behind those palaces at the West-end? The very lowest places upon earth, where the poor are stowed away together by hundreds. We fringe the city with something that looks respectable; but, alas! for the internals of this city, how much of wickedness and sin dwell there! I bless God that there are some of you who are obliged to live where you see the wickedness of this city; I thank God that some of you cannot go to your houses at night, without seeing wickedness on the road. "Why," you ask, "do you bless God that there is this wickedness?" No, I do not; but I bless God that you have to see it, because you will be the people who will go to others, and say, "Strive for the salvation of men. Work, I beseech you, to do good, because the world is still full of wickedness, and the dark places even of this city are full of the habitations of cruelty."

It is a long time since I have made a good speech at a public meeting; but I do remember doing it once. I stepped out, as one of the speakers was delivering a very pretty oration, and I went into a neighbouring house to speak with a woman who wished to join the church. It was not in London. When I entered the house, there was the husband horribly drunk; he had got his wife up in a corner, and was with all his might trying to beat and bruise her, and he was even tearing her arms with his nails till the blood freely flowed from her arms and face. Two or three friends rushed in, and dragged him away. She said she had endeavoured, in all meekness, to persuade him to allow her to go to the house of God that night; and the only reason why he ill-treated her was, because he said she would always be going to that place of worship. And when I had seen that sight, and looked on the poor, bleeding woman, with tears in her eyes, I went back into the place, and spoke like a man who had got his heart, and his whole body, full of fire. I could not help it; I was all on flame against the sin of drunkenness, and sought, with all my might, to urge the members of the church to do all they could to scatter the light of the gospel in a neighbourhood which was so dark and black and filthy and abandoned. And I think it would do all of us good, when we are about to preach, if we were sometimes to be dragged through some of the worst parts of London, to let us see the wickedness of it. It would do our Sunday-school teachers good, many of them, for they would then be more in earnest with their children; and I think it would do good to some of our old friends, who sit and sleep almost all the service through, and are never much more than sleeping partners in the concern. If they did but know how the battle was going on, how tough the struggle and how stern the conflict, they would wake up from their slumbers, and go forth to the battle, and stand shoulder to shoulder, and deal blow after blow against the common enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the welfare of man.

Ah, my brethren, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation; for if there be anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other

matter, it is in the matter of earnestness. Whitefield said, in one of his sermons, "O my God, when I think how this wicked city is perishing, and how many are dying for lack of knowledge, I feel as if I could stand on the top of every hackney coach in the streets of London to preach the gospel." Why did he say that? Why was his zeal so burning? Because he had seen the sinfulness of men, and marked their follies. We shall never be thoroughly in earnest till we are thoroughly aware of the evil that is before us. When the horse sees the precipice, he throws himself back, and will not madly dash himself down. So is it with the Church of Christ; if she could see the evil that is before her, she would surely draw herself back with energy, to save her own children from plunging into the yawning gulf. Ay, sirs, ye have iniquity in your very midst, and at your doors; ye have iniquity everywhere round about you, and yet how few of you are striving to do anything for Christ! Ye are asked to help in this great battle; but ye have so many other things to do, ye cannot help us. Ye are asked to do something in this cause, to give it a little time; but ye cannot manage it. Ye are asked to speak; but ye have so little ability, ye cannot do it. One half of the people who call themselves Christians want to be pressed fifty times to do a thing; and then, when they are got to do it, they are not worth having, because they are only pressed men,—they are not one half so good as volunteers. I would that all of us knew the evil state of this world, and the wickedness of men; and then I think that all of us who love the Saviour would start up from our seats, and each one would say, "Here am I; let me be a volunteer against the enemy; let me, in my measure, whatever little measure that may be, go forth to serve my God, to practise virtue, and, by a holy example and by every other means, seek to stem the raging torrent of the iniquity of the age."

Now, my dear friends, in closing, allow me just this one remark to another class of hearers. There is one who, but a little while ago, was an abandoned sinner; he could drink, he could swear, he could break the Sabbath, and curse God. One day, he stepped into the house of God, and the Lord met with him, and now he is in misery, such as he cannot describe; his heart is all broken, his conscience is as if it had been lashed with the tenfold whip of the law, and as if brine had then been rubbed into his wounds; he is smarting all over with the wounds of his conscience, inflicted by the angry and fiery law of God. He is crying, in his agony, "O Lord, I must perish, I know I must; I see such wickedness in my soul, that I must perish and be cast away." Nay, poor soul, nay, that is not the right answer to the question of the text. The question is, Why doth the Lord show thee iniquity? I will give thee the right answer. *It is, in order that he may deliver thee from it.* If God has broken thine heart, he has broken it on purpose to give thee a new one. If he has killed thee by the law, he has killed thee on purpose to make thee alive by the gospel. If he has wounded thee in thy conscience, he has done it that he may have room to pour in the oil and the balm of Christ Jesus. If he has stripped thee, he has only pulled off thy rags that he may put on thee a

perfect robe of spotless righteousness; and if he has cast thee into the ditch, so that thine own clothes abhor thee, as Job words it, it is that he may take thee to the fountain filled with blood, and give thee a perfect washing. When the Lord pulls a man down, he does it in order that he may build him up again. When he breaks a man's heart, it is not for the mere breaking's sake, it is that he may make it anew. If you have misery in your conscience on account of sin, God has had dealings of love with you, and he has purposes of love concerning you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If you are a convinced sinner, Jesus died for you, for he died for sinners. If you can truly say that you are a sinner, I can tell you that Christ Jesus hung upon the cross for you. Look at him there, bleeding; every drop of blood says to you, "I drop, poor sinner, for thee." Look at that gash in his side, whence flows the double stream of water and blood; it says, "Sinner, this stream runs for thee." Art thou a sinner? If so, Christ died for thee; and he hath not died in vain, thou shalt be saved. If thou dost but know thyself to be a *bona fide* sinner, a real one, no mere complimentary sham sinner, but a real actual one, who means what he says, when he declares himself to be guilty and vile; then, as the Lord liveth, Jesus Christ died for you on Calvary; you shall behold his face with joy; you shall be numbered with the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and you shall sing eternal hallelujahs around the throne of God and the Lamb.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOB I. 1—5.

Verse 1. *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*

That was Job's character before the trial which made him famous; perhaps, if it had not been for that trial, we should never have heard of him; now, as the apostle James wrote, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." God, by great afflictions, gave to his servant that usefulness for which he had possibly prayed, without knowing how it would come to him. A long-continued life of prosperity may not so truly glorify God as a life that is chequered by adversity; and God, who intended to put honour upon his servant, did as kings do when they confer the honour of knighthood, they strike with the back or flat of the sword, so God smote the patriarch Job that he might raise him above his fellow-men. The Lord intended to make him Job the patient, but to that end he must make him Job the sufferer.

From this Book I learn what gospel perfection is. We are told that Job was perfect and upright, yet I am sure that he was not free from tendencies to evil, he was not absolutely perfect. As old Master Trapp says, "God's people may be perfect, but they are not perfectly perfect;" and so it certainly was with Job. There were imperfections deep down in his character which his trials developed, and which the grace of God no doubt afterwards removed; but after the manner of speech that is used in Holy

Scripture, Job was a "perfect" man; he was sincere, thorough-hearted, consecrated; and he was also "upright." He leaned neither this way nor that way, he had no twist in him, he had no selfish ends to serve. He was "one that feared God." Everybody could see that; and, consequently, he hated evil with all his heart.

2. *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.*

It was a great privilege to have such a family as this, but it brought to Job great responsibilities and many anxieties.

3. *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

A man may be a good man and a rich man, but it is not usually the case. I am afraid that what Mr. Bunyan says is all too true,—

> "Gold and the gospel seldom do agree;
> Religion always sides with poverty."

Yet it should not be so, for God can give a man grace enough to use all his substance to his Lord's glory. I wish that it were oftener the case that we could see a holy Job as well as a godly Lazarus, a company of men who would prove their consecration to God by never allowing their wealth to become their master, but being master of all their substance, and realizing constantly that it is all the Lord's. This, after all, is the noblest heritage a man has with the exception of his God. Job, in adversity, could possess his soul in patience because, in his prosperity, he had not let his riches possess him, but he had possessed them.

4. *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.*

This showed that it was not drunken riotousness, or they would not have wanted their sisters; the sweet, gentle, delicate influence of their sisters would tend to keep their feasting what it should be. Besides, they were the sons of a man of God, and so they would know how to keep their feasting within due bounds. Yet we are all mortal and fallible, and feasting times are dangerous times. The Puritans used to call fasting, soul-fattening fasting; but feasting, they might call soul-weakening feasting. Solomon truly said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." There is always a risk about feasting, and Job was therefore a little afraid about how his sons might have behaved.

5. *And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.*

They might have spoken unadvisedly with their lips, they might have even taken God's name in vain, there might have been something about their conduct which was not altogether proper; so their father desired to put the sin of it away. Observe Job's resort to burnt offerings. He lived before the Jewish law was given, yet he felt the instinct concerning the need of a sacrifice which every believing heart feels when it approaches the holy God. I pray you, never give up that idea of coming to God by means of a sacrifice, for there is no other way of access. We may think as we will, but there is nothing else that will ever quiet the conscience, and bring us near to God, but the divinely-appointed sacrifice. And Job knew this; he did not think that his sons could be cleansed by his prayers alone, but he must offer burnt sacrifices according to the number of them all, that they might every one have a share in the blessings which those sacrifices typified.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BONDS WHICH COULD NOT HOLD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

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"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."—Acts ii. 24.

PETER is here speaking of the risen Christ, whom God had raised up, "having loosed the pains of death;" so it is clear that, whatever those pains were, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ felt them, he felt them much more than his followers do; for, in his death-agony, he was left without the sustaining help of God, and the light of his Father's countenance was hidden from him. His death was a bitter one indeed, he took the deepest draughts of wormwood and gall, for he had to "taste death for every man," whatever that mysterious expression may mean. We must never imagine that there was about Christ's death anything which took away from its bitterness; there was much that increased it, but nothing that diminished it. He was bound, as with strong cords, by the pains of death; all his powers were, for a time, fettered, he was held captive, and he did really die. After death, he was buried; but there was this remarkable fact about his dead body, it saw no corruption. In the case of ordinary corpses, corruption begins very speedily. In a climate like that of Jerusalem, it is very quick in doing its work of dissolving the mortal fabric; but, although our Lord did truly die, no taint of corruption came upon his precious body.

The reason for that was, first, because it was not necessary. Corruption is not a part of the sentence which Christ had to bear. The penalty of sin is death, and that he bore to the utmost; but there was no necessity that he should also endure the usual consequences of death; and, therefore, although he died, his flesh was not permitted to see corruption.

Again, as it was not necessary, so it would not have been seemly that our Lord Jesus Christ's body should ever be tainted by decay as all other bodies are. It was not right that One who was so pure and holy as he was, One who stood in what theologians call hypostatical union with the Godhead,—(it is not easy to explain

exactly what is meant by that term, but it refers to our Lord's intimate and complete union with the Godhead,—) it would not have been comely that such a body as his should see corruption, and therefore it was preserved from the defilement which death usually brings in its train.

And, further, it was not even natural that the body of Christ should see corruption, for albeit that it was like our bodies in many respects, yet we must never forget that there was a vast difference even in his birth. Through the immaculate conception of our Lord, no taint of sin was in his nature; by a mysterious overshadowing which we must not attempt to understand, "that holy thing" which was born of the virgin was truly "the Son of God," "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" and as there was no original taint about that sacred body, so there was never afterwards a single action, or even thought, by which its chaste and perfect purity could have been defiled. If our first parents had never sinned, it would not have been necessary for these bodies of ours to die, and to become corrupt; and in taking our place, and suffering in our stead, there did come upon Christ the necessity that he should die, but there was no natural necessity that his dead body should become corrupt, and it did not pass into a state of decay, for it was not the will of God that his soul should be left in Hades, or that his holy body should see corruption. While it is quite true that Christ is made in all things like unto his brethren, yet there is always some point of distinction to indicate that, although he is our Brother, he is "the firstborn among many brethren," "the chiefest among ten thousand;" and if others are lovely, yet "he is altogether lovely." So, although he really died, and his body was laid in the tomb as the dead usually are, yet, inasmuch as it was preserved from corruption, it is marked out as being above and different from all the rest.

I. I am going now to speak upon the fact mentioned in the text, that IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BONDS OF DEATH SHOULD HOLD OUR LORD. God raised him up, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Why was it impossible that the bonds of death should hold Christ? There are several reasons; the first is, that *Christ had in himself the inherent power to die, and to live again.* I will not enlarge upon this truth, but simply give you our Lord's own words concerning it: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Now, in the realms of the dead, before that time, there had never been seen any person who had the inherent power to take up his life again. Neither had there ever been one there who had possessed the inherent power to lay down his life when he pleased, for no mere man has ever been the absolute master of his own life; so that our Lord Jesus was the first who ever entered the portals of the tomb bearing within himself the power to rise again whenever he pleased.

Next, *the dignity of his person* rendered it impossible that he should be held by the cords of death, apart from the consent of his own will; for, though Jesus Christ was truly human,—and let that blessed fact never be forgotten,—yet his humanity was in so close an alliance with the Godhead, that, though we do not say that the humanity did really become divine, yet "Jesus Christ himself" altogether is divine, and is to be worshipped and adored in the completeness of his blessed person; and, therefore, that flesh, which he took upon himself for our sake, was uplifted, exalted, ennobled, by being taken into mysterious unity with his Deity. It could not be that a body, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, could be held by the bonds of death. He who slept in Joseph's tomb was the Son of God. It was he who is without beginning of days or end of years, he with whom Jehovah took counsel when he laid the foundations of the heavens and built all worlds, for "without him was not anything made that was made." It was not, therefore, possible that he should be held by the bonds of death. Marvellous condescension, not human weakness, brought him into the sepulchre; it was by his own free will that he was laid in the tomb; and, consequently, he had but to exert his royal prerogative, and he could rise again from the dead whenever he pleased.

Those two reasons might be sufficient to prove the assertion I made concerning our Lord, but I want you to notice, with delight, a third one. It was not possible that the dead Christ should be held by the bonds of death any longer than the third morning *because his redeeming work was done.* Remember—and oh! how well some of you know it, and how gladly do you welcome it!—that the reason why Jesus died was because he took the sin of his people upon himself; and being found in the sinner's place, he had to suffer the sinner's doom, which was death. But after he had endured the penalty, that is, after he had died, and remained the appointed time in the tomb, how could he be held any longer in the grave? After he had said, "It is finished," and after the predestinated hours for a full examination of his work before the throne of God had passed, why should he be detained any longer? He was the Hostage for our debt; but when the debt was paid, who could keep him in durance vile? Having borne the penalty, he was free for ever; and so, as Paul writes, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." In that he has satisfied all the claims of the law of God, what hand can arrest him, what power can hold him captive? He died for our sins, but he rose again for our justification, and his rising proved that all his people were accounted righteous in the sight of God. It was not possible, while there was a just God in heaven, that Christ should remain in the tomb. As his work was done, justice demanded that he should be let go;—

"And now both the Surety and sinner are free."

In the next place, it was not possible that Christ should remain in the tomb because *he had his Father's promise that he should not.* I have already reminded you that David, speaking by inspiration,

had said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades;" (the abode of departed spirits;) "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." That promise must be kept, so it was not possible that Christ should remain in the grave beyond the appointed period; indeed, this was part of the Father's purpose and plan, and an essential part of the great work of the redemption of his elect, that he who died should rise again; and what is in Jehovah's plan and purpose, none shall ever gainsay. When he openeth the door, no man is able to shut it; and where he shutteth up, no man can possibly open. Even Nebuchadnezzar, when he came to his right mind, said concerning the Most High, "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" So, when the Father had purposed and decreed that his Son, Jesus Christ, should not be held any longer by the bonds of death, it was not possible for him to be detained.

Remember, too, dear friends, that there is a fifth reason for Christ's deliverance; that is to be found in *the perpetuity of his offices*. You scarcely need for me to remind you that our Lord Jesus Christ was a priest, but not after the order of the Aaronic priests, for they died, and there was an end of them so far as their priesthood was concerned; but to Christ it was said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." But a man cannot be a priest when he is dead; therefore, since Christ's is a Melchisedec priesthood, he "is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life;" and, in order that he might have that endless life, it was necessary that he should rise from the dead,—his Melchisedec priesthood required it.

Next, Jesus was King as well as Priest. You know what sort of a king he was, for it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Now Christ must reign. It is also written that "he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." But a dead king cannot reign; and, therefore, Christ must rise from the tomb. He must have death under his feet, for death is one of his enemies; but if he had not risen from the dead, he would have been under the feet of death, and that could never be. So that both his priestly and kingly offices required that he should rise from the grave.

Ay, and so did his office as our Redeemer; for, when he undertook to become our next of kin, and to redeem us, it was essential that he should continue to live, or else that ancient cry of the patriarch Job would not have remained true, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Therefore, he must rise from the dead. I cannot stay to go further into this argument; but if you will think over it yourselves, you will see that, because Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," because each of his offices is everlasting, ordained of God in perpetuity, therefore he must rise from the dead.

But, to come to the close of this part of our subject, it was not possible, *in the very nature of things*, for Christ to be held by the bonds of death. If he had been, think what the consequences to

us would have been; for, first, we should have had no assurance of our own resurrection. The blessed hope that those who have been called away from us, and whose bodies we have committed to the earth, shall rise again, would have been without any substantial foundation. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." When you get the firstfruits of a harvest, you feel certain that the rest of it will be garnered in due time. So Christ has risen as the first of a great host, and we thus have an assurance, which otherwise we could not have had, but which is essential to the comfort of Christians.

Only imagine what would have been the consequences to us if that assurance had not been ours. There would have been no evidence of our justification. I might have said, "Yes, Christ took my debt, but how do I know that he paid it? Christ bore my sins, but how do I know that he put them away?" So, if he had never risen from the dead, we should have had no proof that we were justified.

Then, too, if he had never risen, and gone up to heaven in his human body, we should not have had anyone to take possession of heaven on our behalf. Now we have "a man in possession." We have a wondrous Representative before the throne, who has taken seizin and grip of the divine estates. What a joy it is to us to know that he is there to represent us before God!

Further, if Christ's body had remained in the grave, there could have been no reign of Christ, and no sitting down at the right hand of God, as there now is. He would have been in heaven in the same respect as he is here as God; but there would have been no visible appearance of the representative Man, and the once-crucified Redeemer; and the ransomed ones could not have sung, "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," for he would not have been there to hear the song. They might have recollected the sacrifice on Calvary; but he, as the Lamb that had been slain, wearing the marks of his priesthood and death, would not have been there.

II. Now I pass on to my second observation, which is that, AS CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, HE COULD NOT BE HELD BY ANY OTHER BONDS.

If he was more than a match for death, who or what shall ever be able to stand against him? Death, the slaughterer of all mankind, before whom kings and princes, as well as the meanest of their subjects, lie prostrate in the tomb;—death, before whom giants bend as a rush sways to and fro in the wind;—even death is vanquished by Christ. He is the destroyer of destruction, and the death of death; then, what power can possibly stand in opposition to him? I want to cheer you, dear friends, in these dark and evil days, with a strong belief in our great Master's omnipotence and invincible might. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. With such a hero as he is to lead us on, victory is sure, however stern may be the conflict.

Think, for a few minutes, how many things have tried to bind the Christ of God, and to overthrow his righteous rule. At first, and

even until now, *old-established error* has assailed the truth of God. What fools some people thought that those few fishermen were when they imagined that they could upset the firmly-established Judaism of the chosen people and the deeply-ingrained idolatry of other nations! The systems of the heathen were beautiful with art, adorned with poetry, intensely lascivious, and they had a tremendous power over the popular mind. If we had lived in those days, and had been unbelievers who had seen those fishermen start out to preach, we should have said to them, "Go home with you! Do you think you are ever going to overthrow the philosophies of Plato and Socrates, and all the reverence for the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome?" Ah! but from their deep foundations that little band of men plucked up by the very roots those old idolatries, for Christ could not be held in bondage by them.

Then there came another period, in which men thought themselves exceedingly wise, and *the wisdom of this world* set itself in array against the gospel of Christ, even as it does to-day; but he who was Victor over death can never be defeated by the Academy. Think not, beloved, that the most learned fools can be a match for him who overcame death itself. When Christ's cause was at the lowest ebb,—when he himself was dead, and all his disciples were scattered, yet even then he snatched the crown from the hands of the skeleton king, and won a complete victory over him. Think you that he, who is Wisdom Incarnate, does not know how the wise men and the scribes of to-day jest and jeer at him? Yet there is no philosopher who can bind the Christ any more than Samson could be bound by the green withs of the Philistines.

Next, there came a time when men tried to bind up the kingdom of Christ with *the bonds of ignorance.* They took away the Bible from the people, they concealed the gospel in the Latin tongue, and the nations were steeped in midnight darkness. Yet Christ could not be bound even then. He had only to call Wycliffe, and Huss, and Jerome, and Luther, and Calvin, and Melancthon, and Zwingle, and very soon they let men know that Christ could not be held in the bonds of the Pope. The Conqueror of death was not to be vanquished by any mortal man, whoever he might be.

Since then, we have come to times in which *wealth, and rank, and fashion, and prestige,* are all against the gospel; but what matters it? Nowadays, the multitudes pour their scorn upon righteousness, and call that "cant and hypocrisy" which is really a defence of that which is right and true; and Satan is casting a fatal spell over the professing church itself, so that it is getting worldly, and is giving up its primitive simplicity. Sometimes, I am inclined to sit down, and weep and grieve as I see how sadly the battle seems to go against us to-day; we seem to be losing ground, instead of gaining the victory. But will I wring my hands in despair? God forbid! "The Strength of Israel will not lie," neither shall his cause fail. Let men forsake him if they will, or let them come out armed against him if they dare, his kingdom shall still stand fast, for he must reign, and as death cannot bind him, nothing else can. The pleasure of the Lord must prosper in his hands, therefore in patience

possess your souls; go on quietly witnessing for Christ; and if you do not see the rulers of the nations converted to Christ, and the great and learned men bowing humbly before him, remember that it was never so, and is never likely to be so. Take care that you yourselves remain steadfast in faith in the Eternal, and all shall be well with you.

III. Now, in closing my discourse, there is a truth upon which I wish to insist with great earnestness; it is this. As CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KEEP IN BONDAGE ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO HIM.

You recollect that, when Pharaoh told Moses that the men among the children of Israel might go into the wilderness to offer sacrifice, he said that they must leave their little ones behind; but Moses would not accept that condition. The next time, Pharaoh said, "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." But Moses answered, "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind." All that was of Israel was to go with Israel; and that is still our Master's will and way. "Where I am," saith he, "there shall my people be also. If I am in the grave, they must be in the grave, too, buried with me; if I rise, they also shall rise, for I will not rise without them; and if I go to heaven, I will not go without them." This is our joy, and with dear old Rowland Hill we can sing,—

> **"And this I do find, we two are so joined,**
> **He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind."**

Now, my friend, where are you,—*you who are struggling to get to Christ?* You are somewhere in this place, I verily believe. You have been resolving to find Christ, and you have really put your trust in him; it is a very poor little trust as yet, and no sooner have you begun to think seriously about divine things, than you are in great trouble. There are your old sins, and you wonder how you will ever get rid of the guilt of former years. Ah! my dear hearer, if you fully trust in Christ, your old sins shall vanish away through his precious blood. They are bonds that cannot hold a soul for whom Christ hath died. "Oh, but there are also my old habits," says one, "my tendency to do what I have been doing for years. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' How then shall I, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well?" Put you your trust in Christ, and those old habits shall not be able to hold you. They may, perhaps, take some time to break; but they shall all be broken, and you shall be set free. Christ could not be held by the bonds of death, neither shall you, who truly trust him, be held by the bonds of habit. Possibly you say, "My old companions get round me, and they worry me to go back to them." Let them worry as much as they like; but if you trust in Christ, God will give you grace to set your face like a flint against them, and you shall be a bolder and braver soldier of Christ because they oppose you. Perhaps it is better for you to be per-

secuted than to be allowed to live too easily. The other day, I put some primroses in my conservatory; those that were left out in the open, to endure the cold windy nights, bloomed splendidly; but those that were in the warmer atmosphere did not get on nearly so well. There are some Christians that are like the primrose, they need a little cold weather, and do not get on so well where it is too warm. The Lord sends you opposition to make you all the stronger. But the bands of the wicked cannot hold you; break loose from them, I pray you, through the power God gives you by his grace.

"Ah!" you say, "but Satan himself breaks in upon me." Very likely he does; but just resist him, steadfast in the faith. Possibly he is throwing blasphemies into your mind, injecting evil thoughts which you never had before. But if a thousand devils were to bind you thus with cords, so that you could not move hand or foot, yet, depend upon it, you shall slip out of the cords, and come into perfect liberty, for all the devils in hell cannot hold a soul that belongs to Christ, and you do belong to him if you truly trust him.

Perhaps I am also speaking to *some child of God who has fallen into great trouble.* You are an old Christian, and yet you have got into a sad scrape. You were never in such a condition before, and you seem to be bound with the cords of trouble after trouble, as if they were tightly knotted around you so that you could not get loose. There are also the cords of depression of spirit, and they sometimes cut very painfully, and hold you bound like a poor captive. Perhaps also the devil, as well as your own depression, has tied you up. There is a diabolical temptation that has come to you;—you are even afraid that you are not a child of God at all, and you begin to doubt everything. You were never before bound as you are now; you seem to be thrust into the inner prison, and your feet made fast in the stocks. If so, I believe that God has sent me to do to you as the angel did to Peter. You know that the angel went to Peter, when he was asleep in the prison, and smote him on the side. Well, I cannot get near enough to you to do that, so you must take it as done. Then what did the angel do to Peter? He raised him up, his chains fell off from his hands, and the angel said to him, "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did." Then the angel said, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me;" and Peter did so, and he walked through the first and the second ward of the prison. At last, they came to the iron gate leading into the city,—that great gate that needed half-a-dozen men to open it, and Peter was surprised to see it open of its own accord. He never saw anything like that before, and soon he found himself with the cool night air playing on his forehead, and he was a free man again. All the Herods and all the devils cannot shut up a man who trusts in God; so, my friend, you will come out of your prison again. You are like a cork in the water; men may press you below the surface, but you are bound to come to the top again. You know what Haman planned for Mordecai; he meant to hang him up on the high gallows that he had erected. He was not satisfied with that, for he intended also to kill all who belonged to

the same race as Mordecai, he meant that not a Jew should be allowed to live; but when his plans could not be carried out as he intended, his wise men and his wife said to him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him;" and so it came to pass, for there swung Haman on the gallows that he had erected for the execution of Mordecai. My dear friends, there may be a Haman plotting against you; leave him alone. If he is making the gallows, let him finish them; they will come in for himself in due time. If you belong to Jesus Christ, and if you belong to the seed of the believers, before whom Satan has begun to fall, he will never prevail against you, but you will overcome him, for you must reign with Christ for ever, for he himself has said so.

Finally, beloved, there is a part of Christ's redeemed possession that is under mortgage at present, it is not yet delivered from the bond that holds it. What part is that? It is *this poor body, these bones, and this flesh and blood*, for although "the Spirit is life because of righteousness," the body is still "dead because of sin." And soon, that poor body of yours, unless Christ shall come first, will see corruption, and moulder, and go back to dust; but mark this, as I have already said, Christ will not leave any fragment of his people in the hands of the enemy; he will not leave any portion of his people—no, not so much as a bone of them,—under the dominion of death. The hour shall come when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; and as the soul has been redeemed, so shall the body also enter into the fulness of the joy of adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. We have buried many of the godly; there is many a *Campo Santo*, round about this great city, where sleep the pious dead; and we have wept as we have committed them to the silent clay. But they are not lost,—not one of them is lost. No baby, chosen of God to see heaven ere it saw much of the world, no man, or woman in middle life, taken from the midst of the conflict, no grey-headed man, who leaned upon his staff for very age, and came to the grave like a shock of corn to the garner;—there shall not one of them be lost, nor an eye, nor a foot, nor a hand, of any one of them; yea, and the very hairs of their head are all numbered. The Lord hath taken an inventory of all that he has bought with his precious blood, and he will have it all; not merely the souls and spirits of his people, but their bodies, too. Who is to stop him? Death knows his power, but must yield to it. The strong man armed did keep the sepulchre, but a stronger than he came in, and burst the bands of the tomb, and he came forth alive; and—

> "As the Lord our Saviour rose,
> So all his followers must;"

for, as it is written, "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and it is not possible that they, who are, as it were, the bones of his mystical body, should be holden by the bonds of death. O happy people, who belong to Christ! God grant that we may all be numbered amongst them, for his great name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ACTS II.

Verse 1. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

The first lesson that we ought to learn from this inspired record of what happened on the day of Pentecost is, that we cannot expect a revival until there is unity among Christians. The Spirit of God will not visit and bless a church where there is strife. These disciples in Jerusalem "were all with one accord in one place" "in prayer and supplication," as the fourteenth verse of the previous chapter tells us.

2—6. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together,—*

It was a great cause for surprise that men should be able to speak in foreign tongues without any previous instruction. The sound was heard outside the upper room where they were gathered, many pressed to the door to listen, and then went away to tell the strange news, and thus "the multitude came together,"—

6, 7. *And were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?*

"These men are Jews, and they come from a country district where the people are more than ordinarily illiterate. It is strange that they should be able to speak in foreign languages."

8—11. *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

"I think you, good sir, come from Parthia?" "I do, and I am astonished to hear these Jews speak the Parthian tongue." "And you, sir?" "I am from Media, and I am amazed to hear them speak the language of the Medes; 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange. 'How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?'"

12, 13. *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*

They heard languages which they did not understand as well as those they did understand; so, putting the worst possible construction upon the wondrous scene, they said that the speakers were drunk. It is the mark of a wicked mind when we are ready to attribute evil reasons in the lack of any other. Let us never do this, but always be ready to believe all the good of men that we can.

14, 15. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*

"It is but nine o'clock in the morning; you cannot really imagine that these men are drunk." We might have thought it hardly worth while to

take notice of such an observation; but Peter knew how to conciliate the crowd, and to meet them upon their own ground. He began where they left off, but he went on to say what they little expected to hear:—

16—21. *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Peter was speaking to a Jewish audience, so he began by quoting from the Old Testament. He was wise to win their attention by a long passage out of one of their own prophets. Now he comes nearer to his main point:—

22, 23. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

How boldly he puts the truth before his hearers! He charges home the murder of Christ upon them, yet he skilfully softens it by that introduction about "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." This is a very wonderful verse, because it shows us that everything is predetermined and foreknown by God; and yet when men do wickedly, they are responsible for it. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." There is no man in this world who knows where these two great truths of man's free agency and divine predestination meet. There have been all sorts of schemes and inventions to make the two doctrines agree; and one set of men has denied one of the truths, and another set has denied the other; but do you nothing of the kind. Believe them both, yet do not pretend that you can reconcile them. It may be that, in another state, with larger capacity of mind than we at present possess, we shall be able to reconcile these two truths. I am not sure that we shall do so; and I do not know that even angels can understand this great mystery; but it is a grand thing to exercise faith where we cannot comprehend what is revealed to us. He who only believes what he can understand will have a very short creed, and soon he will have none at all; but he who believes what he cannot understand, simply because it is taught him by revelation from God, is the man who walks humbly with his God, and he shall be accepted. I thank God for the mystery that conceals so much from us; where would there be room for faith if all things were as plain as A B C?

24—28. *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.*

Note how Peter keeps to the Old Testament. Those quotations added force to his argument, for his hearers believed the ancient Scriptures to be the very voice of God, and therefore he gave them much of it.

Having quoted from the Psalms, Peter goes on to make this comment upon David's words:—

29—32. *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

Standing up with the eleven apostles, and with the greater company of disciples behind them, it was a noble utterance of Peter: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

33. *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

"This, which is a mystery to you, is the result of Christ's exaltation at the right hand of his Father."

34—36. *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

There does not seem very much that is original or striking in that sermon; certainly, it is not a very sensational one; there is no fine metaphor in it, no garnishing of poetry; but, in plain, simple language, Peter proves that it is Jesus Christ of whom David spoke in the Psalms. This was exactly what the people wanted to have proved; many of them were ready to receive such proof as that, and they did receive it.

37—40. *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

That is to say, "Come out from among the ungodly; leave the world behind, and escape for your lives."

41—47. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Oh, that we might have the same blessed experience! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 309, 302.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 10TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 4th, 1880.

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD."—Isaiah ii. 5.

WE may regard this invitation, first of all, as addressed to the Jews. According to the preceding verses, the Gentiles are to be brought in: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Then, after that, finding the Jews still alienated from God, the Gentiles will turn to them, and say, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Now, in a measure, this prophecy has been already fulfilled; and the evidence of its fulfilment is before your very eyes at this moment. Multitudes of us Gentiles, whom the Jews only regarded as dogs and outcasts, have been converted to the faith of Christ, and adopted into the family of God; so now, my brethren, we ought to have very great tenderness of heart towards the older branch of the family,—the seed of Abraham, the house of Jacob, the children of Israel, who, for the most part, still reject our Lord Jesus Christ, and remain outside the pale of his Church. A Christian is the last person who ought ever to speak disrespectfully or unkindly of the Jews. We remember that our Lord belonged to that race, and that his first apostles were also of that nation; and we regard that ancient people as the very aristocracy of mankind, tracing back their pedigree to those before whom the mightiest kings might well veil

their faces, and bow in lowliest homage; for I reckon that, to be descended from Abraham, "the friend of God," and "the father of the faithful," is to have a lineage higher than that of any of the princes of the earth.

Let us pray to God continually for the ingathering of the Jews. They are the original branches of the good olive tree, although for a time they have been cut off because of unbelief; and we, who were only wild olive shoots, have been grafted into their places. Shall we boast, and exalt ourselves over them? Nay, for we also seem to be of the house of Jacob;—he was rightly called Jacob, that is, a supplanter, for he supplanted his brother Esau, and we have supplanted the Jews, and have thus become Jacobs to those who are Jacob's seed. Yet they are to be grafted again into the olive tree, and it is according to the mind of Christ that we should pray and labour for their conversion, and long for that happy time when they shall be brought in, and with the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered at the feet of the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

Having said this, which was necessary to explain the text,—for we must never forget the literal meaning of any passage of God's Word, even when we are fully justified in spiritualizing it,—I am now free to speak of the spiritual seed of Israel, for to them also this message comes, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Here is, first, *an invitation*, upon which we will think for a while; and, then, when we have thought of it, *let us accept it*, and let us endeavour now, and throughout the rest of our lives, God helping us, to "walk in the light of the Lord."

I. First, then, HERE IS AN INVITATION.

When a man receives an invitation, he naturally enquires from whom it comes. So we observe, first, that this invitation comes to us *from those to whom we have ministered aforetime.* The literal seed of Jacob had kept God's lamp alight in the world, and other nations had seen that light; and it afterwards turned out that those very nations, which had been enlightened by the Jews, said to them, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." It should greatly encourage us, dear friends, whenever we hear any, whose conversion we have been seeking, say to us, "Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." You who have been blessed in turning sinners to Christ will bear witness with me that there is scarcely any joy, out of heaven, that equals the delight of hearing a sinner express his willingness to come to Christ, and so to "walk in the light of the Lord." I distinctly recollect the first person who ever told me that I had been the means of her conversion. I remember the little cottage in which she dwelt, for she was a poor woman who resided in an obscure village. Her testimony was to me the sweetest music I had ever heard, with the exception of my Saviour's voice when I myself was saved by his grace. I felt then that I must go on preaching, for this was a seal, set to my commission, for which I blessed the Lord day and night. I can recall at this moment the intense delight I had in listening to that good woman's cheering words; I do not know that I have had so much

joy over any score of converts since as I had over that first one. That is a very natural feeling, you know. What a fuss is generally made over the first child in a family! So is it with our first converts; we do rejoice exceedingly over them.

Still, dear friends, however many spiritual children God may have given to us, all whom we have been the means of introducing into the kingdom of Christ are very precious to us; and when we hear them say, "Yes, we will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you; we will walk in the light in which you are walking;" we feel very greatly encouraged, and we resolve that we will persevere in such blessed service. This is the reward of our labour for the Lord; this is the harvest that the husbandman, who sows the seed for Christ, desires to reap. If you have never had this joy, work on till you do have it. If you have had it, I need not tell you to work on; I think you never can leave off such blessed service. I remember well the story of a man, who died some few years ago, who had saved a young man from drowning; and, after rescuing that one from a watery grave, he seemed as if he was insatiable to do the same thing again and again. I think it was eight persons he rescued, one after another, at Hull. He would stand by the dock, in a dangerous place, watching that he might be at hand in case anyone fell into the water. He died, at last, in the very act of saving another person's life; he seemed to be carried away with that passion. In like manner, I would have all the saints of God encouraged, as they bring one and another to Christ, to consecrate their whole time and strength to this glorious —this divine pursuit of bringing men to the Lord Jesus Christ, a work which might fill an angel's heart, and which did fill the Saviour's hands.

So, the invitation in our text may be looked upon as a great encouragement, for it comes from those to whom we have ministered.

But if I read this invitation aright, it comes also *from new converts;* for, according to the context, many Gentiles had just gone up to the house of God, saying, "He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths;" and when they had said that to one another, they turned to the Jews, and said, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." I think it is a very pleasing thing when our new converts begin to exhort us, and invite us to join with them in special acts of devotion; yet, while it is very pleasing in some respects, it also sometimes brings to us a measure of rebuke. I remember how it was with me when, in the earnestness of my young heart's affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, I spoke to some of the older Christians around me, and they tried to snuff me out. A liberal supply of wet blankets was generally kept in store, in certain quarters, and brought into use whenever I went round that way. I survived that operation, however; and now that I am myself getting old, when some enthusiastic young spirit begins to wake me up, I hope I shall not quench his ardour by throwing a wet blanket over him.

When we commence our Christian life, we are full of earnestness and zeal, and we think that we can drive the Church before us,

and drag the world after us; but, by-and-by, we settle down to a much quieter state of things. I think it is a great blessing when the new converts come in among us, and stir us up from our sluggishness, and make us move with something of the enthusiasm that we had in our younger days. I pray God continually to send among us many earnest men and women, who shall lovingly reprove us if we are lukewarm. We constantly need the infusion of new life; and, so far from discouraging zeal, we will do all we can to encourage it. The other day, I heard that a young man had said a very foolish thing for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ; it was said to be so foolish a thing that everybody condemned it. I sent for the speaker to come to see me; for, when a man boldly says, "I believe that such-and-such a thing is true, and I am going to act upon it, although everybody else says, 'You are a simpleton,'" that is the kind of man in whom my heart delights, for I am sure that there is something in him if he is willing to be counted singular because he believes he is following Christ Jesus his Lord. May God send us many such simple-minded, true-hearted, warm-blooded Christians, to keep the church from getting cold and lethargic!

Once more, it seems to me that this invitation comes *from those who seek after mutual edification.* Some had come into the house of God, and had learned his ways, so they turned round to others, and said, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." They did not say, "Go ye;" but they said, "'Come ye;' we wish you to come with us, let us walk together in the light of the Lord." Dear friends, I beg you continually to practise this holy work of mutual exhortation, stirring one another up to greater devotion to our Saviour and his service. We do not think it wise to have public meetings of this kind, because such gatherings are apt to be like the Irish school, where they had not any schoolmaster, and nobody knew anything, and they taught one another! That is the general style of things where everybody speaks; or, when the meeting is more profitable, it is because there are one or two present who really are the instructors of the rest, even though they may not nominally be called so.

But, without meeting with this special object and design, all Christians should be constantly stirring one another up whenever the opportunity of doing so occurs. The moment you yourself get liberty in prayer, call in a brother to pray with you. When you feel very happy, and full of praise to God, tell some dear friend that you want to sing, and ask him to come and sing with you. You go into a neighbour's house to ask his help when you have a burden of care or sorrow resting upon you, then go and ask for his sympathy when your heart is full of joy. Tell him that you cannot sufficiently bless God by yourself, and that you want him as your friend and brother in Christ to aid you in the sweet labour of thanksgiving. O dear brothers and sisters, I beg you to seek to know one another more and more, and mix with one another with the view of helping each other's faith and love! You can scarcely imagine how much you may get from one another by

this kind of mutual intercourse. The commerce of nations enriches and is to the advantage of all who share in it; and the spiritual unity of Christians, making a holy interchange of knowledge, and feeling, and sympathy, will tend to the enrichment of all. In such a church as ours, there ought to be no difficulty in finding kindred spirits with whom you can have holy and helpful fellowship. As soon as you do find them, say to them, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

II. Now I turn to the second head; which is, LET US ACCEPT THE INVITATION. I do not want to say much about it, except to urge you at once to accept it.

"Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." What does this invitation mean? First, I think it means, *let us make use of that light.* Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John tells us that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." My brother, in his prayer just now, very sweetly prayed that God might be to each one of us all that he is, and that is exactly what I want you all to realize; so that, as God is light, he may be light to you; and that we, who are his people, may practically, in our daily lives, walk in the very light of God; and not have a religion locked up, like a diamond bracelet, but may wear it as we wear our every-day garments; that we may not have it like a choice lamp hidden away in a vault, but may have the light of it shining on our every footstep.

Let us "walk in the light of the Lord" *so as to have an absolute certainty about the things which we believe.* Have you ever tried to walk in the light of anybody else? I have not; I never thought it worth my while to do so. I hear sometimes of wonderful new lights that have appeared; but I usually find that they only arise from some crazy-brained individual who has no light to spare. Then I occasionally hear of others who give out a sort of phosphorescent light through some new discoveries of theirs, or the cogitations of their massive minds; and every now and then someone says, "Have you heard that Dr. So-and-so has discovered that the Book of Genesis is wrong? Have you heard that a wonderful arithmetician has found out that there are mistakes in the Book of Numbers?" "Oh, yes," I answer, "I have heard that the Bible is all wrong from Genesis to Revelation; or, if there is a verse in the Scriptures that the learned infidels have not yet assailed, some fool or other will attack it before long." If I am asked, "Are you quite sure about the truth of this Book?" I reply, "Yes, I am quite sure, for I believe entirely in the inspiration of the Bible, and I know that whatever is in that Book is certainly true." Everybody believes in infallibility somewhere. A Romanist believes in an infallible Pope, and a great philosopher believes in his infallible self; he knows that he is right. I believe in this infallible Book, and in the infallible God; and I ask any of you, who are troubled, and worried, and tossed to and fro because of what some heretic or sceptic has said, to "walk in the light of the Lord," and to be perfectly satisfied as to the revelation he has given us in his Word. This Book has been tested and tried for many centuries, and it has never been found wanting. Its light has

never been quenched; it shines, if possible, even more brightly to-day than it ever did before; I mean, that some of the mists and clouds, that hovered round it, have been scattered. This lamp is and always must be the only one to guide men to heaven, for this is the one that God himself has lighted, and that all the devils in hell can never blow out. If all the doctrines of the Bible be assailed, and all its precepts be rejected, and all its records be attacked, and all its promises be contradicted, it need not signify to us as much as the turn of a hair. If we have accepted it as a revelation from God, we may be quite sure as to all that it contains, and therein our spirits may find absolute rest. Come away from the shadow of the dark cloud of unbelief, and come out into the everlasting light of God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for "if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

The next sense in which we are to "walk in the light of the Lord" is to realize God's presence, and, in consequence, *to feel our conscience perfectly at ease.* I mean this,—here is a Christian man who has been doing his best for God, yet somebody suspects his motives, and misrepresents his actions. Where he expected to receive approbation, he receives condemnation; he is evidently misunderstood, and, as far as his fellows are concerned, he is under a cloud. What is that man to do? Why, just to say, "My God, thou knowest everything; thou knowest with what singleness of heart I have served thee, and with what purity of mind I have walked before thee; and I appeal from the unjust verdict of man to the Judge of all the earth, for I am sure that thou wilt judge righteously." It is wonderful what peace of mind is enjoyed by those who "walk in the light of the Lord." Perhaps somebody writes you a stinging letter; possibly, another brings against you a lying accusation; one sneers and another laughs at you; but what does it all matter if you are walking in the light of the Lord? You can live above them all, and say, "I am not a servant of men, but a servant of God; I appear not before the judgment seat even of my fellow-Christians, but I stand to be judged by him who shall judge the quick and the dead; and since my heart condemns me not, I have confidence that God, who is greater than my heart, will also justify me." You will need this kind of feeling, especially if you are called to lead the way, and to serve God above others. God grant that you may have it to the very largest extent that is possible!

Now think of another meaning in the text; that is this. It is a blessed thing to "walk in the light of the Lord," and so to obtain *instruction for the judgment.* Light is constantly used in Scripture as the figurative representation of knowledge, just as darkness is the emblem of ignorance. My brothers and sisters, who know the Lord, I pray you to study God's Word very deeply. I speak specially to some of you who have lately come in from the world, and who confess that you know very little of the Bible. You had not godly parents, you were not brought up in the ways of religion; and some of you, as lately as six months ago, did not go to any place of worship at all; but God, in the sovereignty of his grace,

has now brought you in among his children. So, be diligent students of his Word; meditate upon it day and night, for then shall you be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither." Do not care so much about all other books in the world as about the Word of God; drink continually at the fountain-head. You have heard, I daresay, of the Irishman who was converted to Christ; and whose priest told him that he had better not read the Bible, because it had done so much mischief to unlearned readers, adding, "I will give you the milk of the Word, and will bring it to you." "Well, sir," said Pat, "I will be very much obliged to you if you will do so; but, still, I mean to keep a cow myself, and so I shall be sure to get the milk pure." That is the right thing for you also to do, keep a cow yourself. When you come here, I will do my best to give you the unadulterated milk of the Word; still, I would advise you also to keep a cow yourselves. Carry a lactometer with you, and see whether the milk is genuine. I like people who test and try everything we bring before them by the Word of God; I want you to do it, and I would rather that you had no preacher at all than that you should neglect to search the Scriptures. There is divine light in the Word; therefore, "walk in the light of the Lord." Do not think, dear Christian friends, that you cannot understand what is in the Word of God; the Holy Spirit has promised to teach us. There are some doctrines of the Bible that are very mysterious, some that we call high doctrines; but do not be afraid of them. Even babes in grace may understand the truth of God if they will but give their hearts to it; only be you teachable, and God, through his Word, and by the inward teaching of his Spirit, and by your own experience, will make you quite a great scholar yet in the mysteries of the kingdom. If you are but willing to learn, and especially if you are willing to put into practice the truths that you are taught, you will find that what I say is true. I pray you, endeavour to be intelligent Christians; seek to learn what Christ is ready to teach. He is your Master; be you his disciples. He is your Rabbi; be you his scholars, sit at his feet, and learn of him.

But there is another meaning in our text upon which I shall enlarge a little; it is this. To "walk in the light of the Lord" means, *to have the joy of the Lord.* It is a very unhappy fact that there are some Christians—and we believe they are real Christians, too,—who do not walk much in the light. I believe that there are thousands, who are true believers in Christ, who yet live a great part of their days in the dark. They trust under the shadow of God's wings, and there they are safe; but they do not often get out into the light of his countenance. Now that is a great pity. You know that, if you were to go to Australia in a good sound ship, you would get there even if you were always to lie down in the hold among the luggage and the rats; but I should like to go in a first-class cabin, and I do not see why you and I, if we are going to heaven, should not go first-class. You would not think of taking a long railway journey in a luggage-van, and I want you who are favoured to be in Christ not to be satisfied with mere safety, but

to look for joy and peace also. We may begin even here the music which we are to sing above; it is a pity that we should forego any of the privileges which really belong to us; so, beloved friends, if any of you are in the dark, let me say to you, in the words of the text, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

What is the cause of your darkness? "Oh!" says one, "I am in the dark about my condition before God. I am a believer in Christ, but yet I fear that God is angry with me." Now let me try to shed a little light upon you. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Our Lord himself said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He who believes in Christ Jesus is complete in him. If thou art, at this moment, resting alone in Christ, thy condition before God is that of one whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Thou art, in the sight of God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ; and, therefore, thou art comely and beautiful in his eyes despite all thy spots and all thine imperfections. If thou art a true believer, there will be many a battle within thee, but that will not affect thy standing before God. Thou art his child, one of his elect, upon whom his love has been set from all eternity, and that love never changes nor diminishes. Now in that light walk thou and rejoice;—imperfect, yet perfectly forgiven;—sinning, and yet without spot before God;—in thyself undone, but saved in Jesus Christ, in whom thy soul hath fixed her confidence.

Is the darkness that surrounds you caused by the dispensations of God's providence? "I am very poor," says one; "I am out of work, I have pressing claims that I cannot meet; I have a sick wife, I have a dying child." Stop, dear friend, you have a long story to tell, and a sad one, too; but do you know that the light of God reveals many of the mysteries of his providence? Turn on the bull's-eye of this lantern a minute; here is a ray of its light: "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." I want you to "walk in the light of the Lord" so as to be able to say, "If it is the will of God, it must be right; it could not be better, even though sometimes I have thought that it could not be worse. It is a rough road, but it is the right one, for it leads to the city of habitation. It is bitter physic, but its curing property is amazing.

> "'Then come what may to me,
> It will, it must be blest!
> Home in the distance I can see;
> There I shall be at rest.'"

But what is this darkness of your mind? Is it caused by a fierce struggle within you? Are you crying out, "I cannot understand how it is; but, ever since I have been a Christian, I have felt my sin rising within me more than ever I did before; I am fighting from day to day to keep a hold on goodness at all"? Listen, dear friend; this is frequently the experience of a true child of God that, as soon as ever the new life is put into him, the old life begins to

struggle against it. I dare to say that there never was a real Christian, who has not had, in some measure at least, to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They who say that the apostle was no Christian when he said that make me suspect whether they are themselves Christians, or have had any experience of what God's children have to undergo. The truth is that, the more we seek holiness, the more we learn that we are not as holy as we want to be; and the man who is as good as he wants to be is not good at all. He who has climbed so high that he does not want to get any higher had better begin at the bottom, for he is under a sad delusion. So, be encouraged by the conflict in your heart, and even take comfort from it; be of good cheer, knowing that, as Christ overcame the world, and sin, and Satan, you also shall overcome them, and be able to sing, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Once more, probably you are in the dark because you are afraid to die. Says one, "I tried myself, the other night, by asking, 'Could you die without fear?'" That is a kind of test you need never put to yourself. Suppose Peter had been for weeks trying to see if he could walk on the water, he could not have done it; but the instant that Christ bade him come to him on the water, he could do it, but not previously. John Bunyan, in his earlier days, imagined that, being a child of God, perhaps he could work miracles, so he thought he would say to one of the puddles in the road, "Be dry;" but he felt that he ought to pray first, and as he could not find any promise that he should be able to do that sort of thing, the miracle never came off. What is the good of your having the grace to die with if you are not going to die yet? When you come to die, if you believe in Christ, you may die without the slightest fear. You need to be a great deal more troubled about living than about dying; that is the far more serious thing of the two; yet you need not be troubled about either living or dying when it is written, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If I begin quoting the promises, I feel inclined to keep on; but you can find them for yourselves in the Word of God; you can feed upon them, live upon them, believe them, and act upon them, and in that way "walk in the light of the Lord" from day to day whatever happens to you.

Now come to this communion table in "the light of the Lord." Come that you may remember your Saviour's death. Come saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me. I am my Beloved's; his desire is toward me. I am coming to him, who has brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is love." He says to each believing soul, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Come to the table in the right spirit, and this blessed ordinance will indeed prove to be a festival of love to your souls. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH XXVI.

Verse 1. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.*

God is the great source of song; he "giveth songs in the night." He can make the saddest heart to break forth into praise. One part of the prophecy concerning Christ's coming was, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." The Lord might have caused us to utter nothing but groans if he had pleased; but, instead of doing so, he delights to fill our mouths with joyous songs.

Let us from our heart sing this ancient song: "We have a strong city." The Church of God is a city which has a heavenly citizenship, and other unique privileges; and it is wondrously protected, for the promise in this passage is now fulfilled: "salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

2. *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.*

The city is not closed against the righteous; and if we know and love the truth, and especially if we know and love him who is the Truth, the gates are always open to us, and we may enter the city, enjoy its privileges, and share its protection.

3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,—*

"Peace, peace,"—that is the form of the Hebrew, and it means a double peace, the perfection of peace,—a great depth of peace, the reality of peace, peace upon peace belongs to the man who trusts in the Lord. Are you vexed, and worried, and perplexed, dear friend? Are you tossed to and fro as upon a stormy sea? This verse shows you the way in which you may obtain perfect peace: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,"—

3, 4. *Whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:*

Nothing can be too hard for him, for he has "everlasting strength." Nothing can ever happen in the future to overthrow him, for his is not decaying strength, but "everlasting strength." Hold on to that strength, ye children of God; you may even suck honey out of this "Rock of Ages" (see margin); for there is indescribable sweetness in it: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever:"—not only sometimes, but always;—"for ever," because there is strength in God for ever.

5, 6. *For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.*

You see, there is one city which God builds, and another city which he pulls down. Observe this solemn truth: "For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low;"—that city which is perched on the hill of self-righteousness, and lifted, as it were, almost to heaven by the pride of man,—God will pull it down. It is part of God's glory to lift up that which is down, and to cast down that which is up; for when men exalt themselves, they shall be abased; and when they humble themselves, they shall be exalted.

"He bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down." Oh, if there is anyone here who is trusting in himself, depending upon his own good doings, and reckoning that he will be saved by his own merits, you will have to come down from that high place, my friend; that fine castle of

yours will be left without one stone upon another, and the poorest child of God in all the world shall set his foot upon the loftiest pinnacle of your grand palace. God will bring it down so that "the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy," shall tread on it.

7. *The way of the just is uprightness:*

Or, as it might be better rendered, "The way of the just is an even path." The righteous shall steadily and safely stand in it, while others find themselves sometimes up and sometimes down, and their path shall be slippery and perilous.

7. *Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.*

God judges us by weight, not by appearance; not by what we seem to be, but by what we are in the balances of the sanctuary.

8, 9. *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O* LORD, *have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night;*

Some poor darkened spirit will, I trust, be able to join in this utterance of the prophet. It is night-time with you now; you are not enjoying the light of God's countenance; but be very thankful that you can say, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night." If you are not a child of God, you will be able to do without God; but the fact that some of you cannot be happy except you are living in the light of God's love, proves that you belong to him. A child can be content without a stranger's smile, but if the one who is looking at him is his father, just because he is his father's child he must have the assurance of that father's love, or else he cannot be happy.

9, 10. *Yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the* LORD.

There are none so blind as those who will not see, and there are plenty of such people about. They say that they cannot see this, and they cannot see that; but the truth is that they wilfully shut their eyes, and disregard the everlasting light.

11. *LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

You know what our Lord Jesus said concerning the rich man, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." He would not look at Lazarus while he was lying at his gates, but now he is obliged to look at Lazarus lying in Abraham's bosom. He would not relieve him, nor give him even a crumb from his table, but now he begs that Lazarus may be sent, to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his parched tongue. "They will not see" now; no, "but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy" towards the people of the Lord.

12. *LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us:*

We may be attacked and assailed for a little while, we may be tossed to and fro; but "Thou wilt ordain peace for us:"

12. *For thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

We have no works in which we can glory; for even if we have an abundance of good works, they are all God's work in us, and we give him all the praise for them; and because he has thus wrought in us, we expect that he will give us peace.

13—15. *O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.*

The Jews were scattered and diminished. When they sinned against God, they were exiled; but when the Lord returned to them in favour, he multiplied them, and brought them home again.

16. *LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.*

And it was well for them that they did so. God's true child does not get angry against his Father when he whips him; but, being chastened, he begins to pray; and blessed is that chastening that drives us to our knees: "They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."

17, 18. *Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

Here is the poor Church of God in sore trouble; she says she has been disappointed, her bitterest pangs have not brought her what she expected. What shall happen then? God will interpose.

19. *Thy dead men shall live,—*

We shall rise with all that belong to Christ at the first and blessed resurrection, and all our dead hopes and our dead expectations shall rise too.

19. *Together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

As the soft showers cause the buried bulbs to spring up, so will God's gentle grace fall on men's hearts, and they shall arise, though they seemed to be dead before; and at the last great day, the sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be like a soft vernal shower which brings up the flowers of the earth, and—

"From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day,"—

the bodies of the saints shall rise. O blessed hope! let us look for its fulfilment. Let us make this a part of our song. There is a city that hath foundations, and there is a resurrection which will enable us to enter into that city, to dwell there for ever. Oh, come let us sing of the New Jerusalem, and of the white-robed multitudes that shall dwell therein for ever.

20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee:*

Enter into the secret chambers of communion with your Lord, where you shall be shut out from the world. Enter into the chambers of defence, where God will guard you. Enter into the chambers of devotion, where God shall meet with you.

20, 21. *Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THOSE WHO DESIRE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 17TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 11th, 1880.

"O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name."—Nehemiah i. 11.

NEHEMIAH was earnest in his prayer for the good of his sorrow-stricken nation, but he did not make the mistake of thinking that he was the only praying man in the world. He said, "Be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name." In this one respect, I like Nehemiah better than Elijah. They were both noble men, and greatly concerned for the highest welfare of their fellow-countrymen; but, at one time at least, Elijah did not have a true or a fair estimate of things as they really were. He even presumed to say to God, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." Nehemiah, however, acted on another and a more hopeful principle. When he had presented his own personal supplication, he felt certain that there were others who were also praying to the Lord, so he said, "Be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name." You know, dear friends, that Elijah was quite wrong in his calculation, for God said to him, "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." There were, hidden in caves, or in other parts of the country, thousands who feared God, and bowed the knee to him alone. Let not any one of us fall into the mistake that Elijah made. Do not you, my brother, claim to be the solitary prophet of God, and say, "I only am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." There are quite as good men as you are elsewhere in the world, and there are other people who are as earnest in prayer as you are. If you get supposing that you are the only man left who holds sound doctrine, you will become a bigot; and if you think that you are the only praying man on the

earth, you will most likely prove to be self-righteous. If you fancy you are the only man who has a deep spiritual experience, probably you will be doing a great wrong to others of your Lord's servants, and speaking evil of those whom he has accepted. It is better far to believe, with Nehemiah, that your suppliant voice is not a solitary one; but that there are many who, like yourself, cry day and night unto God.

I think it would be better to go even a little further, and to believe that, if you are earnest, there are others who are still more earnest; and that, if you possess a deep-toned piety, there are some who have even more than you have; so, instead of separating yourself from your brethren and sisters in Christ, as though you stood first and foremost, hope and believe that you are only one small star in a great constellation, one tiny speck in the milky way of divine light with which God still studs the evening sky of this world's history. Take a hopeful view of things, and you will be more likely to be near the mark than if you judge others severely, and imagine yourself to be the only faithful servant of the Lord.

It is quite clear that Nehemiah valued the prayers of others, for he pleaded with God, "Be attentive"—not only "to the prayer of thy servant," but also "to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name." Beloved friends, there is a great value in the prayers of God's people, so we ought to set great store by them. If you ever wish to do me a good turn, pray for me; and if you would be the means of blessing your fellow-Christians, incessantly pray for them. You may think that your petition is of small account, but it is the many littles that make up the great whole. A pinch of incense from each worshipper will fill the house of the Lord with sweet perfume. Small lumps of coal cast into the glowing furnace will still further increase its heat. Do not think that we can afford to lose your prayer, whoever you may be; but cheerfully contribute it to the general treasury of the church's devotion.

It seems to me that the persons to whom Nehemiah referred may be regarded as rather weak servants of God, for they were those who *desired* to fear his name. Perhaps it could not actually be said that they did fear it, but they desired to do so. Still, Nehemiah felt grateful even for their prayers; and we cannot afford to lose the prayer of a single godly child, or of the most feeble Christian among us. Do not twit him with his shortcomings, and say that his prayer is useless. No, my dear weak brother, we need your supplication. Even Abraham could not afford to lose the prayer of Lot, for Abraham's prayer alone did not save a single city of the plain; but poor miserable Lot was able to bring just the last ounce of intercession that turned the sacred scale; he contributed a very little prayer, and thus one city was saved from destruction. Well, then, if Lot's prayer was needed at the back of Abraham's mighty pleading, perhaps the petition of the very least among us may, in God's judgment, suffice to turn the scale in some other instance. The Lord may say, "The prayers of my people have prevailed now that this last one has added his request." If one of you should stay away from the prayer-meeting, and thus not contribute your share to the

supplication of the whole church because you think you are not a person of any much consequence, it may be that yours is the last prayer which is needed to complete the chain, and that it would prevail even as Lot's did. We shall certainly not lose any blessing if you add your prayers to ours, but we shall gain by them. We wish, therefore, to offer to God, not only the prayers of any servant of his who is strong, as Nehemiah was, but also the prayers of any of his servants who desire to fear his name.

I am going now to speak concerning those of whom it is said that they *desire* to fear God's name. I have already described them as being rather feeble folk, yet all who are included in this class are not alike weak. Still, as a rule, it does indicate an early stage of the working of God's grace when we can only say of them that they desire to fear God's name. The two remarks I shall make upon the text are these; first, that *this description includes all who have any true religion;* and, secondly, that *this description includes many grades of grace.*

I. First, then, THIS DESCRIPTION INCLUDES ALL WHO HAVE ANY TRUE RELIGION, they desire to fear God's name.

For, first, *true religion is always a matter of desire.* If you do not desire to fear God, you do not fear him. If you do not feel any desire after that which is right in God's sight, you have not anything at all right in your heart.

Some have a religion that is all a matter of custom. They go to a certain place of worship simply because they were brought up to go there. Their father went before them, and their grandfather went before him, so they follow in their steps as a mere matter of form. If we were to say to them, "Now, do just whatever you like, do not take any notice of what anybody else has done, or is doing; but just please yourself;" in all probability, they would not go any longer; or if they did, it would be from sheer force of custom. These are the people who say that our Sundays are very dull, and that our religious services are—well, I need not repeat what they say of them;—but they do not enjoy them, for they have in their hearts no desire towards fearing God, or towards his worship in the public assembly. They would be far happier if they could go to some place of worldly amusement, or idly loiter by the seaside, for the worship of God's house is a weariness to them, and they are glad when the Sabbath is past. If this is true of any of you, dear friends, do not deceive yourselves about your real condition, for it is clear that you have not any religion at all. If your presence in the sanctuary is not a matter of your own deliberate choice, if you do not desire to fear God's name, there is nothing in it that is acceptable to the Most High, for God abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found. What blessing can result from your coming into his courts, and rendering only hypocritical worship? What art thou doing, after all, every Sabbath day, but sending into God's house the mere pretence of a man, if thy heart is not here? Thy coat is here, thy flesh is here; but not thy very self; and, therefore, the form of worship is a mere mockery.

There are others, whose fear of God arises entirely from dread.

They dare not go to bed at night without offering some sort of prayer;—not because they have any real desire to pray, or to commune with God, but through fear as to what might happen if they omitted their usual form. They would not allow a Sunday to pass without attending the means of grace at least once;—not because they have any desire to go, or any delight in the services of God's house, but because they are afraid not to go. Yet we must always remember that the religion of dread is not the religion of Christ. That which you do because you are afraid to act otherwise, is no evidence of a renewed heart; it is, rather, the proof that you are a slave, living in dread of the lash, and that you would act far otherwise if you dared. But the child of God loves his heavenly Father, and delights to worship him; and, oftentimes, when the Sabbath is about to close, he says,—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

He delights in the worship of God; it is his element, his pleasure, his treasure, and he loves it without measure; so, dear friends, by this test shall ye judge yourselves, for true religion is always a thing of desire. I do verily believe that attendance at public worship in this Tabernacle is a thing of desire to very many. I see people walking to some places of worship in such a sad and solemn way that they look as if they were going to be flogged or burned; but I notice how joyfully most of you trip along when you are coming here. You are glad when the Sabbath arrives, and you look forward to it with delight. May it always be so with you; for you may rest assured that there is no worship which is so acceptable to God as that we from our heart desire to render to him.

So, dear friends, I come back to the assertion that all true religion must be a thing of desire; and not only is this true generally, but if you dissect piety and devotion, you will find that *every part of it must be a matter of desire.* Take repentance, for instance; and I am sure I may say that there never was a man who repented who did not desire to repent; the Holy Spirit never makes anyone repent without his desiring to do it; that would be an impossible thing. So is it with faith; no man believes, against his will, to the saving of his soul; there must be a desire to trust Christ, or else there cannot be true faith. In like manner, no man ever loves God without a desire to do so; it would be an absurdity even to talk of such a thing. Indeed, there is no Christian grace which can be exercised without the desire to exercise it.

So, there is no act of worship which can be performed aright unless it arises from desire. A man never really praises God until he desires to do so. You cannot sit still, and say, "I joined in praising God involuntarily." Desire is also the very life-blood of prayer; an unwilling prayer would be a hollow mockery. If I pray that which I am forced to pray, I insult God. So is it with the observance of the ordinances of the Christian religion. The time was, you know,—and not very many years ago,—when no man

could be a member of a corporation, or could be employed in the service of Her Majesty, unless he would take what some people still erroneously call "the sacrament." Cowper truly said that they made the ordinances of Christ into a picklock of office; but do you suppose that a man, who took "the sacrament" in order that he might be made into a mayor, or a sheriff, or a member of Parliament, ever had in that act any real communion with Christ? It is all but blasphemous to suppose such a thing. The right observance of the ordinance must be a matter of a Christian's own free will; the grace of God must make him desire thus to show forth his Lord's death. Anyone who pretends to observe either of the ordinances of Christ from any motive but holy desire, makes a mockery of them, and certainly does not use them aright.

Desire must be at the back of every religious act, or else there is nothing at all in it. It is so in the case of almsgiving. Always take heed that you do not give to the poor, or to any charity, or to the funds of the church, simply because you are asked to do so; for, unless you really desire to give what you appear to present, you have not in God's sight given it at all. If, in your heart of hearts, you feel, "I wish I had dodged round the pillar, or gone down the other aisle, and so escaped having to give," you have not truly offered anything to God. The shrewd Scotchman's remark was quite right when a man said to him, "I have given a half-crown to the collection when I only intended to give a penny," and asked if he could have it back. "No," said the Scotchman, "when it is once in, it is in for good." "Well," said the man, "I shall get credit for half-a-crown, at any rate." "Oh, no, you won't!" said the canny Scot, "you only intended to give a penny, and you will not get credit for any more than that."

There is another thing that is worthy of observation; that is, wherever there is this holy desire, even if there is no power to carry it into action, *the desire is itself so much the very essence of true religion, that God accepts it.* Desire is acceptable, for instance, in the matter of almsgiving even where no alms can be given. According to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, is the measure of acceptance for his gift. David, you remember, wished to build the temple, but God would not let him carry out that great work because his hands had been stained with blood; yet the Lord said to him, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name;" and God accepted the will for the deed, and blessed David accordingly. This principle may afford encouragement to any one of you who perhaps feels, "I cannot do much for the Lord's cause, but I am quite willing to do all that I can." Be ready to give or to act whenever you have the power, and God, our gracious Lord, will take the will for the deed whenever your desire cannot be translated into action.

But recollect one solemn fact, and that is, that *wherever there is a man who has not even the desire to fear God, there is condemnation;*

such a man must be indeed dead in trespasses and sins. If that is your case, my friend, you have never repented, and you say that you do not desire to repent; you have never believed in Christ Jesus, and you confess that you have no desire to do so; you have never, in spirit and in truth, worshipped the God who made you, and you have no desire to do so; you have never confessed your sin, and sought pardon for it, and you say that you have no desire to do so. Well, you scarcely need, I think, that I should pronounce over you the sentence of condemnation which God's Word declares to be yours. Does not your own conscience tell you how far you must be from the right road when you are not honest, and you say, "I do not want to be honest"? What a confirmed rogue such an individual must be! If a man says, "I am not chaste in life, and I do not want to be chaste," you know how debauched he must be when he not only sins, but finds pleasure in the iniquity, and boasts that he has no wish to be delivered from the evil. God have mercy upon you, my friend, if that is your case! But I pray you to stand convicted of your guilt, and to cry unto God to change your heart, and renew your will, and make you at least to desire to be right; for where that desire is really cherished, there is something good and hopeful about you; but where there is not even a desire after that which is right, and pure, and holy, what can we say but "Woe be unto you unless you repent"?

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN IN OUR TEXT—"Thy servants, who desire to fear thy name,"—INCLUDES MANY GRADES OF GRACE.

It does not, however, include some who would like to be included in it. Here is, for instance, a man who says, "I am not a Christian, but I sometimes desire to be one." Yes, my friend, that is on Sunday night when you are in the company of God's people, but what about Saturday night? What about Friday night, when you received your week's wages? You did not desire to be a Christian then, I think;—at least, when you got home to your wife and family, they could not suppose, from the way you walked, that you had any desire of that sort. Here is another man, who says, "I desire to be a Christian;" yet he is contemplating attendance at some play-house or other each night in the week, and he is arranging to spend a great part of his time in the company of the ungodly. I say frankly that I do not believe in that man's desire to be saved. My friend, your goodness is like the early cloud or the morning dew;—we sometimes have a faint hope concerning you, but while your desires come and go as they hitherto have done, there is a text of Scripture that just suits you, and we advise you to take it home to yourself, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." You are like a man lying in bed, and all the while saying, "I desire to plough my field, but I do not mean to get up at present." The sun has long risen; indeed, it is high noon, but he still says, "I desire to plough my fields, but I do not intend to get up yet;" and so he sleeps on through the whole day. He keeps on saying that he desires to plough his field, and to sow it, but the weather is not favourable; it is either too hot or too cold; it is too dry one day,

and too wet another; so he goes on desiring, and does nothing. The man is a fool, or something worse; and, alas! we have many such foolish folk who are always desiring, and desiring, and desiring, and yet nothing comes of their desires. There is a tombstone, erected in memory of a prince who died some little while ago,—I will not say where he used to live, but his principality was badly managed, I should think, for he never did a good thing in his life except by mistake; no one ever credited him with having done any good; and when he was dead, they put upon his tombstone this inscription, "He was a man of excellent intentions." Yes; and that is all that will be able to be said of many others when they come to die, "They were men of excellent intentions,—sometimes."

Such people are very different from those to whom Nehemiah referred in his prayer: "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of *thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.*" Who are those who are included in this description?

Beginning at the bottom, I should say, first, *the man who has an earnest desire to be right.* I remember once asking a man if he was a Christian, and he answered, "I am very sorry to say that I am not saved; but, oh, sir, I do wish that I were!" I looked at him with much yearning in my own heart, and I saw how earnestly he meant what he had said, and I then went on to enquire why he was not a Christian if he longed to be one; because the great point is to get men to desire to be saved; and when they do desire it, what is there to hinder them from having the blessing? When a boat is guided by a rudder, it only needs that the rudder should be turned in a particular way, and the boat will go round at once; and when a man's heart is so turned that he says, "I really desire to be right with God, I long to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ;" when that is not merely a passing fancy, but when he can truly say, "I am always desiring this; I earnestly and vehemently desire it;"—why, such a man is not far from the kingdom of God.

There is, however, this remark to be added,—*he must not be content with that desire, but must carry it into action.* Suppose that it is time for me to eat my dinner, and that I sit down at the table with the joint before me, and say, "I desire to eat;" and yet that I simply sit looking at the meat; I have my knife and fork ready, and I say that I am earnestly desiring to eat; would not anyone who was near me say, "Then, why do you not eat? There is the meat before you; help yourself"? Ah! dear friend, that is what I have long tried to induce you to do in the matter of food for your soul. Do you not know that all the provisions of the gospel are free to all who desire to partake of them? If thou hast a willing mind, thou mayest come, and thou wilt be heartily welcome; there is nothing to hinder thee, for all that there is in Christ is free to all who will come unto him. Every soul that really desires to have Christ can have him.

Perhaps someone asks, "How may I take him, then?" Why, *simply by trusting him, and entrusting yourself to him.* You know how I have often put it to you, using that verse in which the

apostle Paul says, "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth." Then, swallow it; if it is in your mouth, let it go down into your inmost being; that is all you have to do, take it into your very soul. I do not know of a more beautiful emblem of faith, after all, than that idea of swallowing the truth, receiving it, eating and drinking it, taking Christ, who is the Truth, into your inmost self. Only trust him, and you will no longer cry, "I desire to fear the Lord," for it will be true that you do really fear him.

Now we will go up a stage higher. There are some, included in this number of those who desire to fear God, *who really do fear him, but are afraid they do not;* so they dare not say that they do fear God, but they confess that they do desire to fear him. Now, this is a kind of holy modesty which, if it be not carried too far, is even commendable. The first thing that certain men in Greece did, was to call themselves sophists, or wise men. When they grew wiser, they called themselves philosophists, or philosophers, that is lovers of wisdom; and, sometimes, a man who at first calls himself by a very big name, when he gets to be really bigger, is content with a smaller title. I have known some people who have been very sure about their own conversion, but I did not feel anything like so sure about them; and I have known others who were never sure about their own safety, but always felt a sacred anxiety lest they should not be right, yet I felt quite sure about them, for I always saw in them the marks and evidences of deep sincerity and holy watchfulness. There are many of God's true children who hardly dare call themselves by that privileged name; but there are others who are very sure about their position, to whom we would commend the words of the poet Cowper,—

> "Come, then, a still, small whisper in your ear,—
> He has no hope who never had a fear;
> And he that never doubted of his state,
> He may, perhaps,—perhaps he may—too late."

There is such a thing as never doubting when you ought to doubt; but, on the other hand, I do not want our dear modest friends always to be saying, "I hope, and I trust;" yet never to get any further. Why! surely, the Word of God is very plain, and the way of salvation is very simple. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Then, if you believe on him, you have everlasting life. The man who really trusts Christ loves and fears God; and if you love him, and can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," then you are a God-fearing man. If you are relying for salvation upon Jesus Christ, and have no other trust, then you need not say, "I hope I am saved;" you may be sure that you are saved. Still, God forbid that I should ever seem to condemn those whom God accepts; so, if all you dare to say is that you desire to fear him, give me thine hand, my brother, give me thine hand, my sister; though thou art weak and feeble, and thine enjoyment of the things of God is but slender, thou art in the King's family, one of the redeemed, and thy prayer is needed to be united with ours, so let us have it, and God will accept it.

Let us advance a step further. Those who desire to fear God

are found among those who know that they do fear him, and dare to confess it; but who, nevertheless, are afraid that *their imperfections are so abundant that their religion still lies more in the region of desire than of attainment.* I remember being in the company of a person who was talking very much about his own growth in grace. If I remember rightly, he said something about a higher life than God gives to all his people, and he boasted very much about his own attainments. There was another brother there who said nothing, so the first speaker turned to him, and asked, "Have not you got any religion?" "Yes," he meekly replied; "but I never had any to boast of." I would rather join with the second man than the first. The man who does not believe that he might be any better has very little good at present; he who thinks that he has got to the end of perfection is probably at the wrong end of it. No, no, my brethren, those of us who fear God most desire to fear him more. We have repented, but we want to have a deeper repentance; we do believe in Jesus, but we long to have a stronger faith; we hope to have a brighter, clearer hope than we at present possess; we do serve God, but we wish to serve him ten times as much as we have ever done. Have I any zeal? Oh, that the zeal of his house might eat me up! Am I a saint? Oh, that I might be more fully sanctified, and that sin might be more thoroughly overthrown! There is yet very much left to be desired in the best of us; there is great room for further progress; and we must keep on pressing forward toward that which is before, and forget that which is behind. In this sense, then, we are all amongst those who desire to fear God's name even when we do fear it.

Let us advance another step. There are some who desire to fear God's name in a sense which no doubt was intended by Nehemiah. The poor Jews at Jerusalem could not worship God as they wished to do; there was no temple, no altar, no sacrifice; they could not carry out the ceremonials and festivities which God had ordained, so *they desired to show that they feared God's name more publicly and more openly, and to do it more thoroughly, and with greater freedom and less hindrance.* I daresay I am speaking to some dear child of God who says, "That is just my case,—I do desire to fear God's name, but I am hampered in many ways." You have conscientious convictions, and you are placed just now where you cannot carry them out. You are as yet under age, perhaps, and parental authority is interposed, and you say, "I cannot do what I believe to be right, but I do desire to fear God's name." Hold on to that, dear brother, and do all that you can do, and God will enlarge the place of your footsteps by-and-by. I have known servants who could not get out to the house of God, and other persons placed in positions in the family where they could not enjoy the means of grace, and persons living in villages where they have been obliged, if they went to any place of worship at all, to go where the gospel was not preached. If that is your case, you may well say that you desire to fear God's name, and want more liberty and greater scope; and though you may, at this present moment, be like Naaman the Syrian, and have to bow in the house of Rimmon, I wish you would

not do it,—I wish you would give up Rimmon and his house; but, still, with all the imperfections with which your circumstances surround you, I know some of you, who are God's true children, are in a dreadful fix, and do not know what to do. I want to include you within the lines of those whom God will bless so long as you desire to fear his name. Cry mightily to God about it, and he will yet bring you better days. The apostle Paul said that, if a man, who was a slave, was converted to God, and he could not lawfully get out of his position, he could glorify God as a slave; and you may do the same wherever your lot may be cast. Make it the subject of prayer that you may be able to serve God whatever happens. Perhaps you dwell in Mesech, when you go home to-night, you cannot gather at the family altar, you cannot mention Christ's name in the house where you live without setting blasphemous tongues going directly. Let it be your desire that God will place you in other circumstances; and if he does, then carry out what you desire. Do not let the associations in which you are placed cause your piety to degenerate lest, when God gives you enlargement, you should not have an enlarged heart at the same time, and continue to live as you are now when there will be no excuse for your doing so.

To close my discourse, let me say that the very highest form of devotion we can ever reach is included in the description in the text, "thy servants who desire to fear thy name," for I find that some of our translators and expositors read it, "who *delight* to fear thy name." There is not much variation in it, after all; because, to desire to fear God's name is much the same thing as doing it as a matter of delight. Come, beloved, God grant that we may all get to be of that number who delight to fear his name. May we be of those to whom it is a pleasure and a joy to be the soldiers of the cross, the followers of the Lamb, to whom prayer is recreation, to whom praise is paradise, to whom the service of God is heaven. We are not slaves now, but happy children, who delight in God, and joy in him; and we can sing with our sacred poet,—

"I need not go abroad for joys,
I have a feast at home;
My sighs are turnèd into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the blessèd Dove
Is come into my breast,
To witness thine eternal love,
And give my spirit rest.

O yes, we delight to fear God! Our misery is that we cannot fear him as we would. Our sorrow is if we ever fall into sin. A child of God cannot find pleasure there. He may be led into sin, but he will be whipped for it, and he will whip himself for it. He will groan, and cry, and sigh, to think how wrong he was to go astray; but his greatest delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Thus I have shown you that this description comprehends all ranges and grades of grace. God grant that we may all come in under the description, and may we then take care to present our prayers

with those of all who fear God's name. Be at the prayer-meetings whenever you can; and I beg you to pray at home, and to join the people of God wherever prayer is offered, even though some of you at present only desire to fear his name; and may the Lord bless you all, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

NEHEMIAH I.

Verses 1, 2. *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

Nehemiah was in a high office in Shushan the palace of King Artaxerxes, but his heart was at Jerusalem. He therefore remembered the very date, "in the month Chisleu," when some of his brethren came from Judah to visit him, for he was more interested in their coming than in any transaction of the court in which he was for a while employed.

Observe the subject of this good man's conversation: "I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem." Whenever Christian people meet together, they ought to make the subject of their mutual discourse an enquiry as to the progress of the Kingdom of God in the place where they respectively dwell. If you have come up from the country, we want you to tell us about the work of God in your village, or in the town to which you belong; are there many conversions there? We also will tell you about the work in London. Thus should Christian brethren commune with one another, and ask concerning Christ's kingdom among men, and the progress that his gospel is making.

3. *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

They gave a correct description of the real state of affairs in Jerusalem; they did not colour it, but they stated the actual facts. It is well, sometimes, to tell our Christian brethren about the low estate of Zion; where things are not prospering as they should, it is best to say so, and not to try to smother up the truth, and give a false report.

4. *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

This good man was greatly affected by the sad news which he heard. He was not indifferent to the condition of his countrymen; he did not say, "We are getting on very well here; I am a Jew, and I am in the palace of Artaxerxes, but I cannot do anything to help my brethren. You, who are away there at Jerusalem, must do the best you can." No; Nehemiah said no such thing; he looked upon himself as being part and parcel of the whole Jewish race, just as every true believer should regard all Christians as being near akin to himself. We are not twenty churches, brethren, nor two hundred; our Lord Jesus Christ is the head, and we are members of that one body which is his Church. We ought to sympathize with all who are in Christ; and, especially, if the cause of God is not prospering in any place, we should do as Nehemiah did, he wept, and mourned, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. He tells us what he said in his prayer; these are, as it were, the shorthand notes of his supplication.

5, 6. *And said, I beseech thee, O* LORD *God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.*

This is quite a model prayer. How earnest it is, and how truthful! Nehemiah recognizes the terrible side of God's character as well as his mercifulness. He evidently had right views of God. Some people try to explain away all the passages of Scripture which represent God as a terrible God; whether they know it or not, they will find this course of action to be a great source of weakness to them in dealing with the ungodly. Nehemiah calls Jehovah "the great and terrible God;" but he adds, "that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him." He tells us that he prayed before the Lord day and night. Of course, he had to attend to his daily duties, so that he could not always be upon his knees; but his heart was praying even while he was engaged with other matters; and as often as he could, he retired to his room, so that he might cry out unto God.

Please to observe that he makes a confession of "the sins of the children of Israel." It is our duty as Christians, as it were, to take the great load of the sins of the nation upon ourselves, and to make confession of them before God; if the guilty ones will not repent, we must repent for them; if they will not confess their sins, we must confess their sins as though we stood in their stead. Nehemiah very pathetically says, "and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which *we* have sinned against thee:" and then coming still more closely home, he adds, "both I and my father's house have sinned."

7—9. *We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.*

He quotes the covenant, and he pleads the promise of Jehovah. Now, there is no means of getting a man to do us a favour so powerful as this, to quote his own promise, "You said you would do it." So, here, Nehemiah says, "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses."

10—11. *Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.*

That is, in the sight of King Artaxerxes to whom he was about to speak.

11. *For I was the king's cupbearer.*

He counts this as a high privilege, that he would be able to speak for his people to the great king who would give him the opportunity to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63 (SONG III.), 116 (SONG III.), 39.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, early in the year 1859.

"Not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Matthew xxvi. 39.

THE apostle Paul, writing concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." He who, as God, knew all things, had to learn obedience in the time of his humiliation. He, who is in himself Wisdom Incarnate, did himself condescend to enter the school of suffering, there to learn that important lesson of the Christian life, obedience to the will of God; and here, in Gethsemane's garden, you can see the Divine Scholar going forth to practise his lesson. He had been all his lifetime learning it, and now he has to learn it for the last time in his agony and bloody sweat, and in his terrible death upon the cross. Now is he to discover the utmost depths of suffering, and to attain to the height of the knowledge of obedience. See how well he has learned his lesson; note how complete and ripe a scholar he is. He has attained to the very highest class in that school; and, in the immediate prospect of death, can say to his Father, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

The object of this discourse is to commend to you the blessed example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to urge you to be made like unto your glorious Head, and yourselves to learn, by all the daily providences with which God is pleased to surround you, this lesson of resignation to the will of God, and of making an entire surrender to him.

I have been struck, lately, in reading works by some writers who belong to the Romish Church, with the marvellous love which they have towards the Lord Jesus Christ. I did think, at one time, that it could not be possible for any to be saved in that church; but, often, after I have risen from reading the books of those holy men, and have felt myself to be quite a dwarf by their side, I have said, "Yes, despite their errors, these men must have been taught of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding all the evils of which they have drunk so deeply, I am quite certain that they must have had fellowship with Jesus, or else they could not have written as they did."

Such writers are few and far between; but, still, there is a remnant according to the election of grace even in the midst of that apostate church. Looking at a book by one of them, the other day, I met with this remarkable expression, "Shall that body, which has a thorn-crowned Head, have delicate, pain-fearing members? God forbid!" That remark went straight to my heart at once. I thought how often the children of God shun pain, reproach, and rebuke, and think it to be a strange thing when some fiery trial happens to them. If they would but recollect that their Head had to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and that their Head was crowned with thorns, it would not seem strange to them that the members of his mystical body also have to suffer. If Christ had been some delicate person, if our glorious Head had been reposing upon the soft pillow of ease, then might we, who are the members of his Church, have expected to go through this world with joy and comfort; but if he must be bathed in his own blood, if the thorns must pierce his temples, if his lips must be parched, and if his mouth must be dried up like a furnace, shall we escape suffering and agony? Is Christ to have a head of brass and hands of gold? Is his head to be as if it glowed in the furnace, and are not we to glow in the furnace, too? Must he pass through seas of suffering, and shall we—

"Be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease"?

Ah, no! we must be conformed unto our Lord in his humiliation if we would be made like him also in his glory.

So, brethren and sisters, I have to discourse to you upon this lesson, which some of us have begun to learn, but of which as yet we know so little,—this lesson of saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." First, let me *explain the meaning of this prayer;* then, *urge you, by certain reasons, to make this your constant cry;* next, *show what will be the happy effect of its being the paramount desire of your spirits;* and we will conclude with a practical enquiry,—*what can bring us to this blessed condition?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS PRAYER? "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I shall not address myself to those Christians who are but as dwarfs, who know little about the things of the kingdom. I will speak rather to those who do business in the deep waters of communion, who know what it is to pillow their heads upon the bosom of Jesus, to walk with God as Enoch did, and to talk with him as Abraham did. My dear brethren, only such as you can understand this prayer in all its length and breadth. Your brother, who as yet scarcely knows the meaning of the word communion, may pray thus in some feeble measure; yet it is not to be expected that he should discern all the spiritual teaching that there is in these words of our Lord; but to you who are Christ-taught, you who have become ripe scholars in the school of Christ, to you I may speak as unto wise men,—judge ye what I say.

If you and I mean this prayer, and do not use it as a mere form of words, but mean it in all its fulness, we must be prepared for

this kind of experience. Sometimes, when we are in the midst of the most active service, when we are diligently serving God both with our hands and our heart, and when success is crowning all our labours, *the Lord will lay us aside*, take us right away from the vineyard, and thrust us into the furnace. Just at the very time when the church seems to need us most, and when the world's necessities are most of all appealing to us, and when our hearts are full of love towards Christ and towards our fellow-creatures, it will often happen that, just then, God will strike us down with sickness, or remove us from our sphere of activity. But if we really mean this prayer, we must be prepared to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is not easy, for does not the Holy Spirit himself teach us to long after active service for our Saviour? Does he not, when he gives us love towards our fellow-men, constrain us, as it were, to make their salvation our meat and our drink? When he is actively at work within our hearts, do we not feel as if we could not live without serving God? Do we not then feel that, to labour for the Lord is our highest rest, and that toil for Jesus is our sweetest pleasure? Does it not then seem most trying to our ardent spirit to be compelled to drink the cup of sickness, and to be incapable of doing anything actively for God? The preacher is seeing men converted and his ministry successful; but, on a sudden, he is compelled to cease from preaching; or the Sunday-school teacher has, by the grace of God, been the means of bringing his class into an interesting and hopeful condition; yet, just when the class needs his presence most, he is smitten down, so that he cannot go on with his work. Ah! then it is that the spirit finds it hard to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." But if we adopt this prayer, this is what it means; that we should be prepared to suffer instead of to serve, and should be as willing to lie in the trenches as to scale the walls, and as willing to be laid aside in the King's hospital as to be fighting in the midst of the rank and file of the King's army. This is hard to flesh and blood, but we must do it if we present this petition.

If we really mean this prayer, there will be a second trial for us. Sometimes, *God will demand of us that we labour in unpropitious fields;* he will set his children to plough the rock, and to cast their bread upon the waters. He will send his Ezekiel to prophesy in a valley full of dry bones, and his Jonah to carry his message to Nineveh. He will give his servants strange work to do,—work which seems as if it never could be successful, or bring honour either to God or to themselves. I doubt not that there are some ministers, who toil and labour with all their might, yet who see but little fruit. Far away in the dark places of heathendom, there are men who have been toiling for years with scarcely a convert to cheer them; and here, too, in England, there are men who are preaching, in all sincerity and faithfulness, the Word of the Lord, yet they do not see souls converted. They know that they are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that perish, and in them that are saved. Our hearts are, I trust, so full of the Spirit prompting us to cry, like Rachel, "Give me children, or I die;" that we cannot

rest content without seeing the success of our labours. Yet the Master, in effect, says to us, "No, I tell you to continue to toil for me, though I give you no fruit for your labour; you are to keep on ploughing this rock, simply because I tell you to do it." Ah! then, brethren, it is hard to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." But we must say it; we must feel that we are ready to forego even the joy of harvest, and the glory of success, if God wills it.

At other times, *God will remove his people, from positions of honourable service, to other offices that are far inferior in the minds of men.* I think that I should feel it hard if I had to be banished from my large congregation, and from my thousands of hearers, to a small village where I could only preach the gospel to a little company of people; yet I am sure that, if I entered fully into the spirit of our Lord's words,—"Not as I will, but as thou wilt,"—I should be quite as ready to be there as to be here. I have heard that, among the Jesuits, such is the extraordinary obedience which they are compelled to pay to their superiors, that, on one occasion, there was a president of one of their colleges, who had written some of the most learned books in any language, a man of the highest talents, and the superior of the order took a freak into his head, for some reason, to send him straight away from the country where he was to Bath, to stand there in the street for a year, and sweep the crossing; and the man did it. He was compelled to do it; his vow obliged him to do anything that he was told to do. Now, in a spiritual sense, this is hard to perform; but, nevertheless, it is a Christian's duty. We remember the saying of a good man that the angels in heaven are so completely given up to obedience to God that, if there should be two works to do, ruling an empire and sweeping a crossing, neither of the two angels, who might be selected to go on these two errands, would have any choice in the matter, but would just leave it with their Lord to decide which part they were to fulfil. You may, perhaps, be called from the charge of the services in a place of worship, to become one of the humblest members in another church; you may be taken from a place of much honour, and put in the very lowest ranks of the army; are you willing to submit to that kind of treatment? Your flesh and blood say, "Lord, if I may still serve in thine army, let me be a captain; or, at least, let me be a sergeant, or a corporal. If I may help to draw thy chariot, let me be the leading horse, let me run first in the team, let me wear the gay ribbons." But God may say to you, "I have put thee there in the thick of the battle, now I will place thee behind; I have given thee vigour and strength to fight with great success, now I will make thee tarry by the stuff; I have done with thee in the prominent position, now I will use thee somewhere else." But if we can only pray this prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," we shall be ready to serve God anywhere and everywhere, so long as we know that we are doing his will.

But there is another trial which we shall all have to endure in our measure, which will prove whether we understand by this prayer what Christ meant by it. Sometimes, *in the service of Christ, we must be prepared to endure the loss of reputation, of*

honour, and even of character itself. I remember, when I first came to London to preach the Word, I thought that I could bear anything for Christ; but I found myself shamefully slandered, all manner of falsehoods were uttered concerning me, and in agony I fell on my face before God, and cried unto him. I felt as though that was a thing I could not bear; my character was very dear to me, and I could not endure to have such false things said about me. Then this thought came to me, "You must give up all to Christ, you must surrender everything for him, character, reputation, and all that you have; and if it is the Lord's will, you shall be reckoned the vilest of the vile, so long as you can still continue to serve him, and your character is really pure, you need not fear. If it is your Master's will that you shall be trampled and spit upon by all the wicked men in the world, you must simply bear it, and say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'" And I remember then how I rose from my knees, and sang to myself that verse,—

> **"If on my face, for thy dear name,**
> **Shame and reproaches be,**
> **All hail reproach, and welcome shame,**
> **If thou remember me."**

"But how hard it was," you say, "for you to suffer the loss of character, and to have evil things spoken against you falsely for Christ's name's sake!" And what was the reason why it was so hard? Why, it was just because I had not fully learnt how to pray this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ,—and I am afraid that I have not completely learnt it yet. It is a very delightful thing to have even our enemies speaking well of us, to go through this world with such holiness of character that men who pour scorn upon all religion cannot find fault with us; but it is an equally glorious thing for us to be set in the pillory of shame, to be pelted by every passer-by, to be the song of the drunkard, to be the by-word of the swearer, when we do not deserve it, and to endure all this for Christ's sake. This is true heroism; this is the meaning of the prayer of our text.

Again, some of you have at times thought, "Oh, if the Master will only be pleased to open a door for me where I may be the means of doing good! *How glad I should be if I could have either more wealth, or more influence, or more knowledge, or more talents, with which I might serve him better!*" You have prayed about the matter, and thought about it, and you have said, "If I could only get into such-and-such a position, how excellently should I be able to serve God!" You have seen your Master give to some of his servants ten talents, but he has given you only one; you have gone on your knees, and asked him to be good enough to trust you with two, and he has refused it. Or you have had two, and you have asked him to let you have ten; and he has said, "No, I will give you two talents, and no more." But you say, "Is it not a laudable desire that I should seek to do more good?" Certainly; trade with your talents, multiply them if you can. But suppose you have no power of utterance, suppose you have no opportunities of serving God, or even suppose the sphere of your influence is limited, what then? Why, you are to say, "Lord, I hoped it was

thy will that I might have a wider sphere; but if it is not, although I long to serve thee on a larger scale, I will be quite content to glorify thee in my present narrower sphere, for I feel that here is an opportunity for the trial of my faith and resignation, and again I say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'"

Christian men, are you prepared heartily to pray this prayer? I fear there is not a single individual amongst us who could pray it in all its fulness of meaning. Perhaps you may go as far as I have already gone; but if God should take you at your word, and say, "My will is that your wife should be smitten with a fatal illness, and, like a fading lily, droop and die before your eyes; that your children should be caught up to my loving bosom in heaven; that your house should be burned with fire; that you should be left penniless, a pauper dependent on the charity of others; it is my will that you should cross the sea; that you should go to distant lands, and endure unheard-of hardships; it is my will that, at last, your bones should lie bleaching on the desert sand in some foreign clime." Are you willing to endure all this for Christ? Remember that you have not attained unto the full meaning of this prayer until you have said "Yes" to all that it means; and, until you can go to the uttermost lengths to which God's providence may go, you have not gone to the full extent of the resignation in this cry of our Lord. Many of the early Christians, I think, did know this prayer by heart; it is wonderful how willing they were to do anything and be anything for Christ. They had got this idea into their heads, that they were not to live to themselves; and they had it also in their hearts; and they believed that, to be martyred, was the highest honour they could possibly wish for. Consequently, if they were brought to the tribunals of the judges, they never ran away from their persecutors; they almost courted death, for they thought it was the highest privilege that they could possibly have if they might be torn in pieces by the lions in the arena, or be decapitated with the sword. Now, if we also could but get that idea into our hearts, with what courage would it gird us, how fully might we then serve God, and how patiently might we endure persecution if we had but learnt the meaning of this prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

II. In the second place, I AM TO TRY AND GIVE YOU SOME REASONS WHY IT WILL BE BEST FOR US ALL TO SEEK TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US, SO THAT WE MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THIS FRAME OF MIND AND HEART.

And the first reason is, because it is simply *a matter of right.* God ought to have his way at all times, and I ought not to have mine whenever it is contrary to his. If ever my will is at cross purposes to the will of the Supreme, it is but right that mine should yield to his. If I could have my own way,—if such a poor, feeble creature as I am could thwart the Omnipotent Creator, it would be wrong for me to do it. What! hath he made me, and shall he not do as he wills with me? Is he like the potter, and am I but as the clay, and shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" No, my Lord, it is but right

that thou shouldest do what thou pleasest with me, for I am thine; —thine, for thou hast made me;—thine, for thou hast bought me with thy blood. If I am a jewel purchased with the precious blood of Jesus, then he may cut me into what shape he pleases, he may polish me as he chooses, he may let me lie in the darkness of the casket, or let me glitter in his hand or in his diadem; in fact, he may do with me just as he wills, for I am his; and so long as I know that he does it, I must say, "Whatever he does is right; my will shall not be in opposition to his will."

But, again, this is not only a matter of right, *it is a matter of wisdom with us.* Depend upon it, dear brethren, if we could have our own will, it would often be the worst thing in the world for us; but to let God have his way with us, even if it were in our power to thwart him, would be an act of wisdom on our part. What do I desire when I wish to have my own will? I desire my own happiness; well, but I shall get it far more easily if I let God have his will, for the will of God is both for his own glory and my happiness; so, however much I may think that my own will would tend to my comfort and happiness, I may rest assured that God's will would be infinitely more profitable to me than my own; and that, although God's will may seem to make it dark and dreary for me at the time, yet from seeming evil he will bring forth good, such as never could have been produced from that supposed good after which my weak and feeble judgment is so apt to run.

But, again, suppose it were possible for us to have our own will, *would it not be an infringement of that loving reliance which Christ may well ask at our hands, that we should trust him?* Are we not saved by trusting our Lord Jesus Christ? Has not faith in Christ been the means of saving me from sin and hell? Then, surely I must not run away from this rule when I come into positions of trial and difficulty. If faith has been superior to sin, through the blood of Christ, it will certainly be superior to trial, through the almighty arm of Christ. Did I not tell him, when I first came to him, that I would trust no one but him? Did I not declare that all my other confidences were burst and broken, and scattered to the winds; and did I not ask that he would permit me to put my trust in him alone; and shall I, after that, play the traitor? Shall I now set up some other object in which to place my trust? Oh, no! my love to Jesus, my gratitude to him for his condescension in accepting my faith, binds me henceforth to trust to him, and to him alone.

We often lose the force of a truth by not making it palpable to our own mind; let us try to make this one so. Imagine the Lord Jesus to be visibly present in this pulpit; suppose that he looks down upon one of you, and says, "My child, thy will and mine do not, just now, agree; thou desirest such-and-such a thing, but I say, 'Nay, thou must not have it;' now, my child, which will is to prevail, mine or thine?" Suppose you were to reply, "Lord, I must have my will," do you not think he would look at you with eyes of infinite sadness and pity, and say to you, "What! did I give up my will for thee, and wilt thou not give up thy will for me? Did I surrender all I had, even my life, for thy sake, and dost thou say,

thou self-willed child, 'I must have these things according to my will, and contrary to thy wish and purpose, O my Saviour'?" Surely, you could not talk like that; rather, I think I see you instantly falling on your knees, and saying, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for ever harbouring such evil thoughts; no, my Lord, even if thy will be hard, I will think it pleasant; if it be bitter, I will believe that the bitterest draught is sweet. Let me but see thee dying on the cross for me, let me only know that thou lovest me, and wherever thou shalt put me, I will be in heaven as long as I can feel that it is thy will that is being done with me. I will be perfectly content to be just wherever thou choosest me to be, and to suffer whatever thou choosest for me to endure." Yes, dear friends, it would show a sad want of that love which we owe to Christ, and of that gratitude which he deserves, if we were once to set our wills up in opposition to his. Therefore, again, beloved, for love's sake, for wisdom's sake, for right's sake, I beseech you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to impart to you its blessed meaning.

III. I notice, in the next place, THE EFFECT OF TRULY SAYING AND FEELING, "NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT."

The first effect is, *constant happiness*. If you would find out the cause of most of your sorrows, dig at the root of your self-will; for that is where it lies. When your heart is wholly sanctified unto God, and your will is entirely subdued to him, the bitter becomes sweet, pain is changed to pleasure, and suffering is turned into joy. It is not possible for that man's mind to be disturbed whose will is wholly resigned to the will of God. "Well," says one, "that is a very startling statement;" and another says, "I have really sought to have my will resigned to God's will, yet I am disturbed." Yes, and that is simply because, though you have sought, like all the rest of us, you have not yet attained to full resignation to the will of the Lord. But when once you have attained to it,—I fear you never will in this life,—then shall you be free from everything that shall cause you sorrow or discomposure of mind.

Another blessed effect of this prayer, if it is truly presented, is, that *it will give a man holy courage and bravery*. If my mind is wholly resigned to God's will, what have I to fear in all the world? It is with me then as it was with Polycarp; when the Roman emperor threatened that he would banish him, he said, "Thou canst not, for the whole world is my Father's house, and thou canst not banish me from it." "But I will slay thee," said the emperor. "Nay, thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away all thy treasures." "Nay, thou canst not; for I have nothing that thou knowest of; my treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there also." "But I will drive thee away from men, and thou shalt have no friend left." "Nay, that thou canst not do, for I have a Friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me; I defy thee, for there is nothing that thou canst do unto me." And so can the Christian always say, if once his will agrees with God's will; he may defy all men, and defy hell itself, for he will be able to say, "Nothing can happen to me that is contrary to the will of

God; and if it be his will, it is my will, too; if it pleases God, it pleases me. God has been pleased to give me part of his will, so I am satisfied with whatever he sends."

Man is, after all, only the second cause of our sorows. A persecutor says, perhaps, to a child of God, "I can afflict thee." "Nay, thou canst not, for thou art dependent on the first Great Cause, and he and I are agreed." Ah! dear friends, there is nothing that makes men such cowards as having wills contrary to the will of God; but when we resign ourselves wholly into the hands of God, what have we to fear? The thing that made Jacob a coward was, that he was not resigned to God's will when Esau came to meet him. God had foretold that the elder of the two sons of Isaac should serve the younger; Jacob's business was to believe that, and to go boldly forward with his wives and children, and not to bow down before Esau, but to say, "The promise is, the elder shall serve the younger; I am not going to bow down to you; it is your place to fall prostrate before me." But poor Jacob said, "Perhaps it is God's will that Esau should conquer me, and smite the mothers and their children; but my will is that it shall not be so." The contest is well pictured at the ford Jabbok; but if Jacob had not disbelieved God's promise, he would never have bowed himself to the earth seven times before his brother Esau. In the holy majesty of his faith, he would have said, "Esau, my brother, thou canst do me no hurt; for thou canst do nothing contrary to the will of God. Thou canst do nothing contrary to his decree, and I will be pleased with whatsoever it is."

So, this resignation to God's will gives, first, joy in the heart, and then it gives fearless courage; and yet another thing follows from it. As soon as anyone truly says, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," this resolve *tends to make every duty light, every trial easy, every tribulation sweet.* We should never feel it to be a hard thing to serve God; yet there are many people, who, if they do a little thing for the Lord, think so much of it; and if there is ever a great thing to be done, you have, first, to plead very hard to get them to do it; and when they do it, very often it is done so badly that you are half sorry you ever asked them to do it. A great many people make very much out of what is really very little. They take one good action which they have performed, and they hammer it out till it becomes as thin as gold leaf, and then they think they may cover a whole week with that one good deed. The seven days shall all be glorified by an action which only takes five minutes to perform; it shall be quite enough, they even think, for all time to come. But the Christian, whose will is conformed to God's will, says, "My Lord, is there anything else for me to do? Then, I will gladly do it. Does it involve want of rest? I will do it. Does it involve loss of time in my business? Does it involve me, sometimes, in toil and fatigue? Lord, it shall be done, if it is thy will; for thy will and mine are in complete agreement. If it is possible, I will do it; and I will count all things but loss that I may win Christ, and be found in him, rejoicing in his righteousness, and not in mine own."

IV. There are many other sweet and blessed effects which this

resignation would produce; but I must close by observing that THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH THIS SPIRIT CAN BE ATTAINED IS BY THE UNCTION OF THE HOLY ONE, the outpouring and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

You may try to subdue your own self, but you will never do it alone. You may labour, by self-denial, to keep down your ambition; but you will find that it takes another shape, and grows by that wherewith you thought to poison it. You may seek to concentrate all the love of your soul on Christ, and in the very act you will find self creeping in. I am sometimes astonished,—and yet not astonished when I know the evil of my own heart,—when I look within myself, and find how impure my motive is at the very moment when I thought it was most pure; and I expect it is the same with you, dear friends. You perform a good action,—some almsgiving to the poor, perhaps. You say, "I will do it very quietly." Someone speaks of it, and you say at once, "I wish you had not spoken of that; I do not like to hear anyone talk of what I have done; it hurts me." Perhaps it is only your pride that makes you say that it hurts you; for some folk make their modesty to be their pride; it is, in fact, their secret pride that they are doing good, and that people do not know it. They glory in that supposed secrecy; and by its coming out they feel that their modesty is spoilt, and they are afraid that people will say, "Ah, you see that it is known what they do; they do not really do their good deeds in secret." So that even our modesty may be our pride; and what some people think their pride may happen to be the will of God, and may be real modesty. It is very hard work to give up our own will; but it is possible, and that is one of the lessons we should learn from this text, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Again, if there is anybody of whom you are a little envious,—perhaps a minister who takes a little of the gloss off you by preaching better than you do, or a Sunday-school teacher who is more successful in his work,—make that particular person the object of your most constant prayer, and endeavour as much as lies in you to increase that person's popularity and success. Someone asks, "But you cannot bring human nature up to that point, can you,—to try and exalt one's own rival?" My dear friends, you will never know the full meaning of this prayer till you have tried to do this, and actually sought to honour your rival more than yourself; that is the true spirit of the gospel, "in honour preferring one another." I have sometimes found it hard work, I must confess; but I have schooled myself down to it. Can this be done? Yes, John the Baptist did it; he said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." If you had asked John whether he wished to increase, he would have said, "Well, I should like to have more disciples; still, if it is the Lord's will, I am quite content to go down, and that Christ should go up."

How important, therefore, it is for us to learn how we may attain to this state of acquiescence with our heavenly Father's will! I have given you the reasons for it, but how can it be done? Only by the operation of the Spirit of God. As for flesh and blood, they

will not help you in the least, they will go just the other way; and when you think that, surely, you have got flesh and blood under control, you will find that they have got the upper hand of you just when you thought you were conquering them. Pray the Holy Spirit to abide with you, to dwell in you, to baptize you, to immerse you in his sacred influence, to cover you, to bury you in his sublime power; and so, and only so, when you are completely immersed in the Spirit, and steeped, as it were, in the crimson sea of the Saviour's blood, shall you be made fully to realize the meaning of this great prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "Lord, not self, but Christ; not my own glory, but thy glory; not my aggrandisement, but thine; nay, not even my success, but thy success; not the prosperity of my own church, or my own self, but the prosperity of thy church, the increase of thy glory;—let all that be done as thou wilt, not as I will."

How different this is from everything connected with the world! I have tried to take you up to a very high elevation; and if you have been able to get up there, or even to pant to get up there, how striking has the contrast been between this spirit and the spirit of the worldling! I shall not say anything to those of you who are unconverted, except this. Learn how contrary you are to what God would have you be, and what you must be, ere you can enter the kingdom of heaven. You know that you could not say, "Let God have his will," and you know also that you could not humble yourself to become as a little child. This shows your deep depravity; so, may the Holy Spirit renew you, for you have need of renewing, that you may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus! May he sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and at last present you, faultless, before the throne of God, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 1—11.

Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

If you want to know where the true Church is, Christ here tells you: "I am the true vine." All who are in Christ are in the true Church. If you want to know who is the Father of the Church, its Keeper and Guardian, Christ here tells you: "My Father is the husbandman." Hence, I feel persuaded that the true vine, the Church, will never die, for it is Christ; and I am also persuaded that it will never be uprooted, for Jesus says, "My Father is the husbandman;" and that fact is a guarantee that he will take care of it.

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

In some sense, men and women may be in Christ by a mere outward profession; but if they have no evidence of a real union to Christ, if they produce no fruit, they will be taken away, some by death, and others by apostacy; but they will be taken away.

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

From these words, it is clear that many of the afflictions which we have

to endure are not brought upon us because we are unfruitful, but because we are bearing fruit.

3, 4. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

Dear friends, beware of a Christless Christianity. Beware of trying to be Christians without living daily upon Christ. The branch may just as well try to bear fruit apart from the vine as for you to hope to maintain the reality of Christian life without continual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5, 6. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

The vine must either bear fruit or be good for nothing; and you, believer, must be vitally united to Christ, and bear fruit in consequence of that union, or else you will be like those fruitless vine-branches, of which our Lord said that "men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Do not take that verse as a promise of unlimited answers to prayer, for it is nothing of the kind. Remember the "if" that qualifies it: "*If* ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," for a man who is truly in Christ, as the branch is in the vine, and who is feeding upon Christ's words, will be so influenced by the Holy Spirit that he will not ask anything which is contrary to the mind of God. Consequently, his prayers, though in one sense unrestricted, are really restricted by the tenderness of his conscience, and the sensitiveness of his spirit to the influence of the mind of God. There are some Christians who do not get their prayers answered, and who never will as long as they do not comply with this condition, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." If you do not take notice of Christ's words, he will not take notice of your words. He is not going to open his door to every stranger who chooses to give a runaway knock at it, but he will pay attention to his own children who pay attention to him.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

"Ye shall be known to be my disciples." Everybody will perceive that you must be branches of that fruitful vine, Christ Jesus, if ye bear much fruit.

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

How wondrously Jesus loves those who are truly his! As the Father loved him, so does he love us; that is, without beginning, without measure, without variation, without end.

"Continue ye in my love;" that is, live in it, enjoy it, drink it in, be influenced by it.

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

"You shall live in the realization of my love if you live in obedience to me."

10, 11. *Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

For, when Christ is not pleased with us, we are not likely to have joy in ourselves. Oh, that we may so live as to please Christ!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S POVERTY, OUR RICHES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 3RD, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 18th, 1880.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—
2 Corinthians viii. 9.

IT is well to notice that believers are to be constrained to Christian duty by gospel motives, rather than by legal arguments. It is poor work to try to stir up a Christian to perform an act of grace by an argument fetched from a heathen moralist, and it is equally poor work to try and lead a child of God to perform a service of love by an argument which is applicable only to a slave. Hence you will find that the apostle Paul, when he wants to urge the saints in Corinth to liberality, does not tell them what they are bound to do according to the requirements of the law, for they are not under the law; but he uses arguments suitable for men who have come under the blessed sovereignty of divine grace.

It is also noteworthy that, with regard to Christian liberality, there are no rules laid down in the Word of God. I remember hearing somebody say, "I should like to know exactly what I ought to give." Yes, dear friend, no doubt you would; but you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving, and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality. There is no law to tell me what I should give my father on his birthday; there is no rule laid down in any law-book to decide what present a husband should make to his wife, nor what token of affection we should bestow upon others whom we love. No; the gift must be a free one, or it has lost all its sweetness.

Yet this absence of law and rule does not mean that you are therefore to give less than the Jews did, but rather that you shall give more; because, if I rightly understand what is implied in the term Christian liberality, it is to be according to the example of Christ himself. Our text really gives the Christian law of

liberality: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" that is to say, we should give as we love. You know how much our Lord Jesus Christ loved by knowing how much he gave. He gave himself for us because he loved us with all the force and energy of his nature. Why did that woman break the alabaster box, and pour the precious ointment upon Christ's head, when it might have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor, or when she might have kept her ointment for herself? She gave much because she loved much. I commend to you that rule,—give as you love, and measure your love by your gift.

Further, for this also seems to be the teaching of the text, give till you feel it; for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was proved by the fact that, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." He gave till he felt it, gave till he knew that he was giving all that he had; and I do verily believe that the great sweetness of giving to God begins when we feel the pinch, when we have to deny ourselves in order that we may give. Then it is that there is the true spirit of Christian liberality. Our Lord Jesus Christ gets from a good many people what they would not dare to keep back from him, and what they can readily enough part with; it is sometimes about as much as their shoestrings cost them in a year, certainly not as much as they spend upon the smallest of their many luxuries; yet the most of them consider that they have done all that they should when such insignificant offerings have been laid at their Lord's feet. But, dear friends, I hope that it will be your rule both to give as you love, and to give till you feel it.

And, next, we should in some sense give all, for that is the meaning of the text: "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor;" he emptied himself, he gave all that he had; and we, as Christians, are bound to confess that we belong to Christ, and that all we possess is to be used by us as stewards under him, not reckoning anything to be our own, but gladly admitting that he has entrusted it all to us to be used prudently, and wisely, and discreetly for his glory. Oh, that we all came up to that standard! Then should we have the great pattern and model of Christian liberality reproduced in ourselves far more largely than it is at present.

I was obliged to say what I have done in order to introduce the text to your notice, for we ought never to take a passage of Scripture out of its connection without first of all explaining its real meaning and purport. Still, Christian liberality is not to be my main subject at this time; I want, rather, to show you, first, *how Christ has enriched us by his poverty:* "that ye through his poverty might be rich." When I have spoken about that, I purpose to spend a few minutes in speaking upon *our enjoyment of the riches which Christ's poverty has bestowed upon us.*

I. First, then, I am to tell you about OUR ENRICHMENT BY CHRIST'S POVERTY. How is it that, by Christ's poverty, we become rich?

Firstly, *it was poverty on Christ's part to become a man at all.*

God the Illimitable, the Infinite, veiled himself in human flesh. God the Omnipotent, the Eternal, came here in the form of a babe hanging in weakness at a woman's breast. God, whom angels adore, before whom all heaven bows with deepest solemnity of awe, was found where hornèd oxen fed, and in a manger was he laid. It was poverty for him to take these rags of our poor humanity, and clothe himself with them; for his own robe was the light, his chariot was a flame of fire, his palace the heaven of God; yet was he found at Bethlehem, a Child born, a Son given, that he might redeem his people from all iniquity. We cannot comprehend the condescension of Christ half as well as the angels can; they have a far higher view of the glory of God than we have, and therefore they have a clearer apprehension of the wondrous stoop which Jesus made when he became man for our sakes. What poverty it was for him—it was not so much for Joseph and for Mary as for him,—to be in the inn, and to find that there was no room for him! In fact, what poverty it was for him to be a babe at all!

Yet it is by that poverty of his that we become rich; for, now, every believing man may lift up his head, and rejoice that there is One who sits upon the very throne of God, who also is a man even as he is. Neither Gabriel, nor any other angel, has ever been taken into union with God as we have been. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" "He took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham." Well may we say, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? . . . Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." The next person now to God is Man, and Manhood and Godhead are, in Christ Jesus, joined in a wondrous unity which is indissoluble throughout eternity. O my brethren, at the very outset of our subject we see how the poverty of Christ Incarnate has enriched us!

Being born, *our blessed Lord lived, for many years, a life of poverty at Nazareth.* He was a carpenter, the reputed son of the village carpenter. One is sometimes inclined to wonder what he did throughout those thirty years, and to wish that some authentic record of them had been preserved. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart;" and, at times, we feel some regret that she was not inspired to write down the sayings of the holy child, the wondrous speeches of the sanctified youth as he grew up, the wise words that he uttered as he pushed the plane and drove the nails. Yet we are sure that it was not needful for us to know all that, or it would have been revealed to us. Sufficient is recorded for us to see that he remained in poverty and obscurity at Nazareth for our sakes, because, dear brethren, during those thirty years he was preparing for his public work. It was needful that he should bear that restraint which, for a time, he put upon himself. I doubt not that some of us might have done more for our Lord if we had not begun so soon; if we had enjoyed, in seclusion like our Saviour's, more opportunities of growing in wisdom and stature, and

in favour with God and man, we might, perhaps, have been made more fit for our work even if the term of our service had been somewhat shortened. However that might be with us, we know that our Master was hidden away in quietude, and his poverty was making us rich because he was preparing to achieve that wondrous life-work by which he has enriched all his people to all eternity. He was away there, at Nazareth, having sympathy with obscure people, sympathy with artisans, sympathy with those of whom we seldom hear much, sympathy with those who are shut up in workshops from morning till night, tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin; and, at this moment, the wealth of his great heart, so rich as it is in intense sympathy with manhood, is making us rich, because for those thirty years he was so poor and so obscure.

He came out at last into public life, *and when he emerged from obscurity, it was to a life of poverty.* You remember his words concerning himself: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was dependent upon the gifts of his followers, or upon the godly women who ministered unto him of their substance.

He never made a will, for he had no real or personal property to leave; yet he made that best of all wills when he said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Jesus of Nazareth was most manifestly a poor man; and, in his poverty, he suffered hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and all the woes that are usually associated with poverty.

I might summarize his whole life by quoting Paul's words, "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." That earthly life of his was every moment of it proving that "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows your poverty, dear friends, your want, your woes; all that makes life bitter to you, he has tasted, only that he drank to the very dregs from the cup of which you do but sip a little now and then. It is his poverty that makes you rich at the present moment, and you shall be for ever full of comfort and joy because he was so poor while he was here below.

But it was towards the close of his life here on earth that our Master entered into the deepest poverty of all; and I want you who are believers in Jesus Christ, you who really are his followers, to have patience with me while I show him to you in the extremity of his poverty, and ask you to see how, *even in his deepest agony, he has made you rich.* See him there, amid the olives in Gethsemane's garden, prostrate in prayer, and covered with a bloody sweat as he pleads

with his Father on his people's behalf. Do you see that cup, filled with wormwood and gall, of which he must drink if you are to be saved? Can you bear the sight? Are you not overwhelmed with penitent sorrow as you see the Lord of life and glory lying there covered with his own gore, and know that all his agony was on your account? It is that poverty of his which has made you rich; for he has taken from your hand the cup of his Father's just wrath against sin, and he has drained it himself; and, instead thereof, he has set before you the cup of salvation, from which he bids you to drink the new wine of the kingdom full of joy and delight. So, drink, and forget your poverty, and remember your misery no more; "yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Behold, your Saviour gives you the love of God to drink of; and better than the wine of angels is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Yet you never could have had that cup of blessing in your hand if he had not first emptied that other cup, which his Father gave him to drink,—that cup of awful bitterness which he resolved that you should never taste.

See him rising from prayer in Gethsemane; and, behold, Judas comes, and with a kiss betrays him, and in that betrayal he was poor indeed. But he has, through his poverty, made you rich, for you never shall be betrayed as he was. They bound him, and led him away as their captive; and who is poorer than the man who has lost his liberty, and is taken off to prison and to judgment? Yet that captivity of his has made you a free man in Christ Jesus. When he was personally arrested, he said, concerning his disciples, "Let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none;" and it is the same with you if you believe in him, no warrant from the Court of Heaven shall ever come to you, nor from hell either. If the Son has made you free, you are free indeed, and you shall be free for ever. Christ's captivity has led your captivity captive, and thus again his poverty has made you rich.

Next, they take him away to Annas and Caiaphas. Picture the scene as best you can. He stands before a cruel high priest, who insults and mocks him. Note the depth of his poverty; he is brought so low that he receives no help from the one specially ordained to be the helper of the helpless. Then see how rich you are; for, inasmuch as he had to appear before an unkind and wicked high priest, you have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities; you have a tender and gentle High Priest, to whom you may always come without hesitation or fear. But, had he not stood as a prisoner before Annas and Caiaphas, he would never have become what he now is as the merciful and gracious High Priest exactly adapted to your needs.

Now the wicked men begin to accuse him. He is brought so low that they even rob him of his character; yet, to do that, they have to find false witnesses, and these agree not together; but, still, they do find witnesses to accuse him in order that they may take away his life. Surely, a man is never poorer than when he is left in the hands of his enemies to be slandered in open court, and to

have none to speak in his defence. But let your joy rise high while you remember that it was because Christ was falsely accused that you can now confidently say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" therefore he will lay no iniquity upon those who are in him. "He was numbered with the transgressors;" his name was put in the place of our names, and therefore we are no longer numbered with the transgressors, for no one can now lay anything to our charge, for he has met every accusation on our behalf.

While they had our gracious Master in their power, Herod, Pilate, the priests, and the people mocked him. Oh, it was shameful mockery! They ridiculed his royalty by putting a reed sceptre into his hand, a soldier's old purple coat over his shoulders, and a thorny crown upon his blessed brow; they cast scorn upon his prophetic office by blinding his eyes, and buffeting him, and saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" They spat in his face, they smote him with their hands, they treated him as the vilest of the vile. Now, beloved, see how you are enriched by his poverty. Because of all this shame, which Christ endured, you shall not be put to shame, nor be confounded, world without end. To each believer, the ancient promise is true, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Yes, just as low as your Saviour stooped in his humiliation, so high do you rise because of your union to him; just as much as he was mocked, so much are you honoured. He was treated like a slave and felon, so you are made to be a son of the Highest.

> "Behold what wondrous grace
> The Father hath bestow'd
> On sinners of a mortal race,
> To call them sons of God!"

Not only did those wicked men mock our Lord, but they also scourged him with those cruel thongs which made deep furrows on his blessed back. Oh, what abject poverty was that when his very body was not reckoned as his own, but was allowed to be brutally beaten at the will of another! Yet see how rich he has made us by his poverty, for it is written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." There are no scourgings for thee, believer, for the stripes have all fallen upon thy Substitute. God's sword of justice has been sheathed in the very heart of Christ; so, if thou believest in him, it can never touch thee. Oh, how secure thou art! Not a blow can fall upon thee now, not the smallest drop of divine wrath can ever be thy bitter portion, for Jesus bore the blows for thee, and drank the cup of wrath quite dry. Thy warfare is accomplished, thine iniquity is pardoned, for, in the person of thy great Substitute,

thou hast received of the Lord's hand double for all thy sins, and thou art for ever clear.

After they had scourged the Saviour, they condemned him to death, even the death of the cross, for they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," "and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Yet, while you mourn over that crowning act of infamy, let your hearts dance for very joy, for, because Jesus was condemned, the believer never can be. Here is the Scripture to prove my assertion: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God hath absolved thee, O believer, from all thy guilt, and thou art absolved for ever! Christ hath washed thee in his precious blood, and thou art clean every whit; no speck, nor spot, nor stain of sin remains upon thee, even in the sight of God himself; therefore, go thy way, and sing for joy of heart.

At last, they hanged him up on the cross to die. He was made a curse for us, that the curse which was upon us might be taken away for ever. They stripped him naked, that we might be clothed with his righteousness. God forsook him, so that he might never have to forsake us. His disciples all ran away from him, and left him alone, that we might never be alone, but might always have the Father with us, and, at last, come "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

See, now, the Lord of life and glory has bowed his head in death, he has yielded up the ghost; his poverty has reached its climax, for he is stripped of life itself. Yet therein is the greatest cause of joy for all believers, for we died in him, and sin died in him, and, for us, death died in him. So our greatest riches spring from his deepest poverty; we find eternal life in his death, a heaven in his cross, we ascend to glory through his grave.

I want you, dear friends, to keep this thought vividly and constantly before your minds, that it is Christ's poverty that makes you rich. You must look on everything that relates to your Lord and yourselves by way of contrast; just so far as he goes down, you go up; just so much as he is emptied, you are filled; just as he is condemned, you are justified; just so surely as he dies, so surely do you live beyond the fear of death. Here is a deep mine of unspeakably rich treasure for you; dig in it as much as you can, for you will never exhaust it.

II. I will not detain you many minutes with the second part of our subject, but I want to give you a few practical lessons while I speak about OUR ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST'S RICHES.

Think, dear child of God, that, as it is Christ's poverty that has made you rich, *how poor you would be if you had not Christ!* Perhaps you are possessed of a great deal of worldly property, but it would be poor stuff—would it not?—if you had not Christ with it? All our temporal mercies are like so many ciphers, they count for nothing by themselves; but when you have Christ, there is the great unit before the ciphers, and he gives to them a value which

they could not have without him. All the gold of the Indies, all the silver of Potosi, all the treasures of the world cannot fill the heart of man. How poor is any man, who is here with us now, who has not Christ as his Saviour! You do not think so? But you will think so one of these days, and all believers here pray that you may think so this very hour. Whatever your title-deeds may be, and however large your possessions, if you have not Christ, you are a poor man. Perhaps, on the other hand, you are in deep poverty, and have not anything in this world to call your own. What a poor creature you must be if you have no treasure laid up in heaven! To go home to a miserable hovel in this world, to earn next to nothing, and then to go out of this world into the next poorer still, —O poor, poor soul! Do try, I pray you, to obtain an inheritance in the world to come; for, if you are without God, and without Christ, you are a poverty-stricken creature indeed. God grant that you may not rest contented in your present wretched condition!

The next observation is that, if it is Christ's poverty that has made his people rich, *how foolish are we to try and find our riches in the world!* It is our tendency to try if we can find something that will satisfy us apart from Christ. That is not either wise or kind on our part. If the Lord gives thee temporal mercies, take heed that thou dost not set thine heart upon them. Say concerning them, "They are only toys lent me for a season, and they will have to be given up whenever they are claimed by him who lent them." Always beware of thinking that this world is your home; you are not to be here long enough to strike root. "Ah!" said one, to a wealthy man, when he went over his estates, "these are the things that make it hard to die." So they do; therefore, mind that you always feel like a plant that the gardener has loosely laid in the ground till he can find time to plant it. Suck up just enough nourishment to live upon, but say to yourself, "I am not to live here always, but in a garden where biting winds can never blow; where—

> "'Everlasting spring abides,
> And never-withering flowers;'—

"so I have but to live on here till the gardener comes, and puts me in my proper place." Find not thy riches, dear friend, in a world where Christ had none; but look for thy treasure in the land where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through, and steal.

The next remark I will make is, *how unbelieving it is of some of us to feel poor if we really have been made rich by the poverty of Christ!* Is all that I have been talking about only a matter of fancy, or a freak of the imagination? If it be so, we will throw it away, and beg you not to accept it; but, my dear brethren, if you really believe that Christ's poverty has made you rich, what mean those furrows on your brow, those carking cares, those anxious thoughts that so oft perplex you? You say that they come because you are so poor; but how is that? Christ's poverty hath made you rich; you have not many of this world's poor threepenny pieces

and cracked fourpennies; but you have that which is worth more than gold and diamonds, you have an eternal inheritance, so what are you fretting and worrying yourself about? Here is a young prince, who has got down among the rough boys in the street, and he is crying because he has lost a piece of an old broken plate. You say to him, "Child, go home to the palace; for your father, the king, will give you royal playthings;" and when I see one, who is a child of the King of kings, acting as if he were a worldling, I may well say to him, "Go home, child, to your Father, and begin to rejoice in the eternal possessions which he has laid up for you." You know that we sometimes sing,—

> "He that has made my heaven secure,
> Will here all good provide;
> While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
> What can I want beside?"

Good old John Ryland was right when he sang like that, and we shall be wise if we follow his example. You will have as much as you need, friend, if you trust in the Lord, for "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You know that one stick is enough for a man to walk with; but some of our friends have a great bundle of sticks, and I know some of them who have cartloads of walking-sticks, yet they cannot use more than one at a time. King George III. once met a stable-boy, and said to him, "What do you get, Jack, for your work?" "I get nothing, sir," the boy replied, "only my victuals and drink, and a place to sleep in." The king said, "Well, that is all they give me." That is about all that a man really wants; you cannot eat ten times as much as you now do, even if you have it; and you cannot wear a hundred suits of clothes at once if you have them. If you have more than you need, you cannot enjoy it; so, be content with what you have, and go through the world thanking God that he will take care of you for time and for eternity.

Once again, *how ungrateful it must be in us if we ever flinch from any loss for Christ's sake*, for he became absolutely poor, even unto death, that he might make us rich! Shall we ever hesitate to part with anything for his sake? What if following him should involve us in losses, or if we cannot trade as some people do because the fear of God restrains us, or if we have to give up a situation because we cannot break the Sabbath, or because of some other conscientious difficulty? We ought to take gladly the spoiling of our goods, and rejoice even to suffer the loss of all things, if need be, for the sake of him by whose poverty we have been made rich.

And, finally, *how vast is the inheritance which Christ has given to his people!* If you are to judge of what he gave us by what he gave up for us, it must be something wonderful. If our riches are really in proportion to his poverty, that poverty, even to bloody sweat and death upon the cross, was so extreme that our riches must be extreme, too. Lift up your eyes, ye sons of light, look beyond that narrow stream of death,—over there is your heritage. Do you see that fair city smiling in everlasting light far brighter than the sun? Behold its jewelled courses, and its twelve foundations,

sparkling like a rainbow with divers hues of wealth; and do you hear, as you stand outside its gates of pearl, the matchless melody of the new song that goeth up day without night? Do you see the white robes of the shining ones, in peerless bliss, as they traverse the pavements of gold, and cast their crowns at the feet of the King their Lord and Saviour? All that is yours, and your Lord has given you a guarantee that you shall have it, and all that is needed to bring you there in due time; and you may be there very soon for all you can tell. But suppose you should live to the extreme limit of human life, how soon those years will pass! Or suppose that Christ should come on a sudden,—and he may come at any moment. Or suppose that, while you are sitting here, a convoy of angels should come and bear your spirit away? We are much nearer than we think—some of us are very much nearer than we think to our eternal rest. It is only a week or two, a month or two, a year or two, before we shall be there; then, courage, my soul!

> "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
> And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

I recollect preaching, one summer's afternoon, about the new Jerusalem. There was a sister sitting on my right hand downstairs, —not in this building, but in a country place,—and I noticed her eyes sparkling as I spoke. It seemed to stir my very soul as she looked at me with such an extraordinary gaze of joy, and I was stirred up to say something more, and something better, about our happy home above. When I saw her, apparently still looking at me, a minute or two after, I perceived the same fixed gaze, and I stopped, and said, "I think that sister is dead;" and she was. She had gone home without a sigh, or a groan, or a moan. In the fulness of the prospect, the delight seemed to have swelled like a mighty wave, and washed her on to the heavenly shore. Who knows how soon a similar experience may be ours? We may go to sleep to-night, and awake in eternal glory. We are not far from home; so let us be of good cheer, and rejoice, and praise and bless our Divine Lord that ever he should have stooped so low to raise us so high.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PHILIPPIANS I. 12—30; AND II. 1—13.

Chapter i. Verses 12—14. *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

Notice the beautiful self-forgetfulness of the apostle Paul. So long as the gospel could be more widely published, he did not mind where he was, or what he suffered. He was able to witness for Christ among the Prætorian guards, who had the charge of the prison where he was confined, and who also, in their turn, were on duty in Cæsar's palace; so Paul says that, through his being in bonds there, the particulars concerning his imprisonment were talked about even in the imperial palace, and by that means

the gospel was made known to many in Cæsar's household. Then, in addition, other brethren, who might perhaps have felt compelled to be quiet in his presence, finding that their leader was removed from them, waxed confident to come out and "speak the word without fear." The same sort of thing has often happened since. You have sometimes seen a widely-spreading oak tree cut down, and you have missed its grateful shadow; yet, afterwards, you have discovered that many little trees, which would have been dwarfed beneath its shade, have grown more rapidly in its absence; and, in like manner, the removal of some eminent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has frequently made room for others to spring up, and more than fill his place.

15—19. *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,—*

It is much to be desired that all who preach Christ should preach in a right spirit; but even if they do not, let us be glad that Christ is preached anyhow. Even though it is only a portion of the gospel that is proclaimed, and there is much mixed with it from which we greatly differ, yet, if Christ is preached, his gospel will win its own way, and work out his great purposes of love and mercy. You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a little fire kindled among the dead autumn leaves which are dank and damp; and you have noticed that, despite all the smoke, the fire has continued to live and burn. So is it with the eternal truth of God. Notwithstanding all the error with which it is often damped, and almost smothered, it will live, and the truth will conquer the error which is piled upon it. So Paul says, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,"—

20, 21. *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Again I bid you remark Paul's devotion and self-forgetfulness. It seems to be a matter of no choice with him whether he serves God in life or glorifies him in death. The emblem of the American Baptist Missionary Union is an ox standing between a plough and an altar, with the motto, "Ready for either,"—Ready to spend and be spent in labour, or to be a sacrifice, whichever the Lord pleases.

22—27. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

What a happy church is that where the members all "stand fast in one spirit," and where they are all "with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"—not striving with each other, but all fighting against their common adversary, the devil, and earnestly contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints!

28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*

They give you up as lost because they cannot frighten you; they take it as a token of your perdition that you are not terrified by them, and it is so to them; yet, to you, the peacefulness with which you can endure slander and persecution should be a token of your salvation.

29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

What an honour this is to be conferred upon any follower of Christ,—"not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake"! It is not every Christian who receives this mark of honour. There are some believers who have peculiarly tender places in their hearts, and who are wounded and gashed by the unkind remarks of those who love them not because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. To you, my brother, my sister, it is given—and you may well rejoice in such a gift,—"not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

30. *Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

Chapter ii. Verses 1—4. *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things,—*

Do not obey the world's maxim "Take care of Number One." "Look not every man on his own things,"—

4—7. *But every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation,—*

Observe that expression: "of no reputation,"—

7. *And took upon him the form of a servant,—*

A slave,—

7, 8. *And was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

What a cruel and ignominious death for the Son of God to suffer! Did he lose anything by all this wondrous condescension? Will you lose anything by any dishonour that may come upon you for Christ's sake, for the truth's sake? No; listen to what followed our Saviour's humiliation:—

9—11. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Note how the apostle, after writing on this high theme, again seeks the practical good of his friends at Philippi:—

12, 13. *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—260, 278, 297, 848.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MAN'S EXTREMITY, GOD'S OPPORTUNITY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 10TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 25th, 1880.

"For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."—Deuteronomy xxxii. 36.

THE same event may happen alike to all, yet it may have a very different meaning to different individuals. Ungodly men are brought low by affliction or poverty, for sinners have no immunity from suffering. Saints also are led into trying circumstances, for the utmost holiness will not preserve any man from trial. But what a difference there is between the downfall of the prosperous sinner and of the man whom God loves! The wicked man, who continueth in his wickedness, falleth for ever; but the righteous man, though he may fall seven times, riseth up again, for he shall not fall finally. How dreadful is the language of Jehovah when speaking of the ungodly! "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

The wicked man, who prospers in this world, carries his head very high; he is proud and conceited, and he treads the poor under his feet. His career seems to be one of uninterrupted prosperity; higher, and higher, and higher, and yet higher he mounts; he becomes more wealthy and famous, and, meanwhile, he also becomes more boastful, and more arrogant towards God. He asks, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" He breathes defiance against the Most High; his heart grows harder and harder, like the heart of Pharaoh. Do you see where he is now? He has climbed to the very mountain's brow; he is rejoicing that he has reached the topmost pinnacle of fame. Who can ever pull him down from that height? Who can even disturb his peace? Wait a while, tarry but a brief season. High places are full of danger, and the terrible prophecy shall yet be fulfilled in his experience, and in that of many others who are like him, "Their feet shall slide in due

time;" and when men in such a position do begin to slip and slide, their fall is irrevocable. Down, down they go, falling from precipice to precipice, until they are utterly broken in pieces. Am I addressing any man who thinks that he is beyond the reach of the arrows of the Almighty? Ere another week has passed over your head, sir, you may lie gazing into eternity, and the joints of your loins shall be loosed as you begin to realize that you must so soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Vain, then, will be all your wealth and all your wit. You may now deride the godly, who seek mercy at the hands of God; but, then, you will cry out worse than they have ever done. You have often, in your pride, mocked them in the hour of their distress; but, in the day of your calamity, it may be that, ere you shall have even time to present one prayer to God, your foot shall slide, you will find yourself lost, and for ever have to wring your hands in anguish at your own folly in having despised eternal love, and rejected the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

I would not change places with the greatest man who is living without the Saviour; if I could have the whole world given to me, if I could be the possessor of a thousand worlds, and yet live for a single moment without having my sin forgiven, and without the love of God shed abroad in my heart, it would be a living death to me. I think it should be so with each one of you, and it would be if you carefully thought the matter over; and I invite you to do so, and I earnestly ask you to imagine how dreadful must be the doom of an ungodly man. When he dies, he sinks into the abyss of hell. When his light goes out, there is no means of lighting it again; the tenfold midnight, thick as Egypt's darkness, shall never be broken by the gleaming of a solitary star of hope. I want you to think all the more of this solemn truth because I am going to speak of others, who do fall very low, and suffer very much, yet, after all, their descent is followed by an ascent, their declining leads to a revival, for, according to our text, "the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

I. I shall apply the text, first of all, to THE LORD'S OWN CHURCH.

It may relate to *any sorely-tried church*. I may be addressing some brethren, up from the country, who are members of churches that are sadly declining. If that is the case, let me remind you, dear friends, that God may have a true church which is very severely tried. The track of the ship of the Church has lain full often over very boisterous waters. Sometimes the sea has seethed and the billows have boiled through the fury of persecution; the prow of the vessel has been crimsoned with blood, but onward has she moved. Still has the divine wind speeded her on her way; and, despite the kings of the earth, and all the infernal tortures that Rome's inquisitors could invent, the sturdy ship has gone straight on towards her desired haven. The days of persecution have not yet ceased, but when any churches are brought very low through the attacks of cruel enemies, there is still hope for them in this promise of the living God.

What is far worse for a church even than persecution, it may be minished and brought low through the folly of its own members. Mine eyes could weep day and night over some churches that I know, which seem to me to be determined to commit spiritual suicide. They fall to quarrelling, when they are weak enough already, and need what little strength they have for fighting against the common foe. Often, they divide into parties about nothing at all; and where there should be unbroken brotherhood, there is an absence of anything like Christian love, and therefore the Spirit of God departs from them.

Many churches are, alas! brought low through a faulty ministry. A ministry, that does not ring out, in tones as clear as a clarion, "Salvation by grace, through faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ," is an impoverishing ministry. If there is no nourishing food for the soul, how can it be in spiritual health? Where will the gathering of the people be if the Shiloh is not present? If Christ be absent from the assembly, is not everything lacking that can build up a true Christian church? In many and many a place that I wot of, the members of the church have become few and feeble because the ministry has not fed their souls. And, sometimes, a church may get down so very low that it appears as if it would become altogether extinct. One is afraid that the doors of the chapel will have to be closed, that the altar-fire will go out, and that the testimony for God will cease in that particular hamlet, or village, or township.

Now, brethren, if any of you are members of such a church as that, what you have to make sure of is that *it* is a church of Christ, and that *you* are God's people and God's servants, for our text speaks of God's favour to "his people" and "his servants." This passage does not apply to every nominal church, nor to every conglomeration of merely moral men who call themselves Christians; but it does concern every real church of God, however low it may have been brought.

When you are in such a state as this, what you have to do is to lay the condition of the church to heart, and *to cry unto God to raise it up again.* Use every possible and right means to bring a revival; but if your way is blocked up, and there seems to be no possibility of success attending your efforts, then fall back upon this text, and plead it with God in prayer: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

For, next, *if you pray in faith, God will return to you.* I believe that half-a-dozen persons, with vital religion in their souls, and really in earnest, may pray a church right out of any ditch into which it may have fallen, or bring it up even from the sepulchre where it has been buried, and make it live again in fulness of life; only there must be an intense determination that it shall be so, and real anguish and travail of soul until the desired end is attained. The fact that the church has come to her extremity of weakness should cheer you, rather than drive you to despair; for when a thing is so low that it cannot get any lower, there is some

consolation in that fact. Now is the time to hope that the tide will turn; if it has ebbed out to the very uttermost, now let us trust that it will soon begin to flow again. I do not know whether the common saying is true, that the darkest hour of the night is that which precedes the dawn of day; but let us hope that it is so with your church, and that, when it has got very, very, very low, it has reached its limit of weakness, and that God will raise it up again.

There are some friends, whom I meet every now and then, who tell me that there are very dreadful times coming upon the world; I am not sure that they are right in all their forecasts; but one thing I do know, and that is, if ever the Church of God should get into a worse state than she has ever yet been in, if I am alive at such a time, I will still call together the last half-dozen faithful ones if I am one of them, and I will get them to read with me this verse, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

You remember that, when John Huss was being burned to death, he said, "Within a hundred years, there will come a man whom the persecutors will not be able to burn." The name Huss signified goose, and he said, "there will come a swan that you will never be able to roast;" that was Martin Luther, who was many times in great peril, and yet was not killed by the persecutors. When he was converted, the world was as dark spiritually as it well could be; yet God then found, even in the monastery, a monk whose preaching of the gospel shook the world. Never be afraid of the ultimate issue of the great battle; God will beat the devil yet. Never admit into your mind thoughts that shall lead you to despond concerning the end of the conflict. The battle is the Lord's, and he will give the victory to his gospel yet. If some of the young people here should live to see all those who now preach the gospel laid in the silent grave, if any of you should live to see this place of worship empty, if ever this pulpit should cease to resound with the gospel of Christ, do not give up hope, my brethren; still stick together, even if there are only a few of you left, and cry mightily unto God, pleading the promise of our text, for he will remember you, and will "repent himself for his servants," and his cause shall yet again revive.

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that our text is applicable to THE TRIED BELIEVER. I may be addressing someone to whom these words of Moses shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew.

Beloved brethren, God may bring his people, in the order of his providence, into such a state that "*their power is gone.*" Apparently, they are in such a condition that they are quite unable to help themselves. They have struggled against many difficulties; but, at last, the difficulties have proved more than a match for them. All earthly help has quite failed them; to quote the words of the text, "their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left," —no garrison left in the city, no soldier left in the field, no helper anywhere. You may be like Job, who had no friends left, except

the miserable comforters, who spoke more like enemies than friends. You are not the first of God's servants whose power is gone, and whose friends are gone. The worst about your trial may be that it may seem to you, and seem truly, that *some of your suffering is the result of sin.* You may not have been walking with God as you ought to have done, your heart may have grown cold; so that which has come upon you may be a chastisement for your wandering, it may be a rod in the hand of your loving Father, smiting you because of your folly. But I beseech you, now that all human power is gone, do not run away from God, but fly to him. Do not give up your hope in him. However deplorable your circumstances may be, let them drive you to God, and not from him. Your only hope now lies in the compassion of your God. Let me read this text again to you, and I pray that your faith may enable you to grasp it: "for the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." There is a gracious purpose behind your present trial, even though you do not yet perceive it.

It is possible that it was absolutely necessary that you should be brought as low as you are *in order to cure you of your sin.* You have come to your last shilling, have you? I have known a doctor to keep his patient almost without food, and bring the man down very low in order to starve out the complaint from which he was suffering; and in a surgical case, the knife has had to go in very deeply so as to get at the roots of the cancer. In like manner, it may be that it was necessary that your affliction should not be stopped midway, but should be allowed to proceed to the bitter end, in order that it might be the means of curing you of the evils which were rankling in your spirit.

Possibly, too, the affliction was permitted to develop to the uttermost *in order that you might be induced to return to your God.* It may be that, in your prosperity, you had grown so careless and so fond of the world, and you had so little delight in God, that it was necessary for you to have your gourds withered, and your flowers all made to decay, in order that you might, in your abject distress, turn again unto your God.

Or it may be that God intends that *you should for ever bear a testimony to his faithfulness such as no ordinary man can bear.* Those people who only sail in a little boat on a lake have no stories to tell of adventures at sea; but he who is to write a book describing long voyages must travel far out of sight of land, and behold the sea in the time of storm, as well as in a calm. You are to become, perhaps, an experienced Christian, you are to bring great honour to God by being the means of comforting others who will be tried in a similar way to yours, you are to be trained into a hero, and that cannot be done except by great and bitter griefs coming upon you. I believe that there are some of us whom God cannot trust with much joy. If we carry much sail, his wisdom and his love compel him to give us much ballast also, or else we shall be blown over. There must be many a man who knows within himself that he cannot be trusted with success. His head would turn dizzy if he

were set upon a high pinnacle, and he would get proud, and self-sufficient, and so be ruined. God will not kill his children with sweets any more than he will destroy them with bitters. They shall have a tonic when they need it; but when that tonic is so bitter that they seem as if they could not drink it and live, their Lord will either take the tonic away, or give them some delicious sweetness to remove all the bitter taste.

I will read the text to you again; I cannot preach from it as I should like to do, but the text itself is full of comfort to the Lord's own chosen ones who are in sore straits: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." Tried child of God, I wish I could grasp thy hand in tenderest sympathy, and whisper in thine ear, "In thy lowest moments, do not despair. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' Nay, verily, 'for the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' The Lord himself saith to thee, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;' 'when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.' Therefore, if thou walkest in darkness, and seest no light, trust in the Lord, and stay thyself upon thy God, for he will have compassion upon thee; he will take away his wrath, and smile again upon thy soul, and turn thy lamentation into singing, and thy mourning into dancing."

III. This must suffice for the tried child of God, for I want to show that the text also applies to THE CONVICTED SINNER.

Are there any of you who cannot say that you are the children of God, but who wish that you were? I said to one, the other day, "Are you a Christian?" and he replied, "No, sir; but, oh! how I wish that I were!" When I heard with what emphasis he spoke, I thought that he must be not far from the kingdom; for is not he who wishes to be a Christian, almost one already? Is there not the beginning of a work of grace in his heart which the Holy Spirit will carry on to completion? So I will read the text now to you who wish to be saved, but fear that you shall not be, for you have such a dreadful sense of sin: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

Do these words describe your present condition? First, *is your self-righteousness all gone?* A few months ago, you were a fine fellow according to your own estimate; you thought that there were few as good as you. But, to-night, you came slinking in as if you felt afraid even to sit down with the people of God. You remember that line of the hymn,—

"Then look, sinner,—look unto him, and be saved,"—

and you feel that you would like to look to the Crucified One, you can go as far as that, but you cannot yet say that you have looked unto him, and that you are saved, for you have such an awful sense of your guilt in the sight of God. I know you, my friend; I "know the heart of a stranger;" for such was my heart in the time of my conviction on account of sin. Oh, the heaviness of a guilty conscience! Oh, the long, dark, dreary winter of the soul, when sin blots out the sun, turns even mercy into misery, and sorrow makes the day into night! Ah! I know you, my brother; your self-righteousness is all gone, and I am glad of it; I rejoice that the Lord has broken the iron sinew of your neck, and that your fine feathers and ornaments have all been stripped off you, and that you have put on sackcloth in place of your former comely array. The Lord help you to keep it on till Jesus Christ takes it off, for it is fit livery for a sinner to wear!

Then, next, you say that *your power is all gone.* Not many months ago, you thought that you could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whenever you liked, that it was the easiest thing in all the world to become a Christian, and that you would trust the Saviour, some fine day or other, whenever you pleased. Yet, at this moment, you are sighing, "I would, but can't believe. Lord, relieve my load of guilt. All my help must come from thee." You are the gentleman who was going to conquer his evil temper, and give up his bad habits, and be a saint, and do it all yourself! Oh, yes, yes! then, you thought you could do anything and everything, but now you have come to realize that, apart from Christ, you can do nothing. Only the other morning, when you got up, you prayed to God, and you thought that you would lead a very good life throughout that whole day, yet you were out of temper before breakfast was over. You went to your business, and you were going to be quite an example there; and a pretty example you were! You felt that, as you went home at night, all your attempts to be better, and to do right, had failed. I am glad you have learnt your weakness, and I hope that your consciousness of weakness will become deeper and more painful still; for, until every bone in your body is broken, I am afraid that you will not turn to God. You are, I fear, one of the men who, as long as they can lift a little finger to help themselves, will still put all their trust in that little finger, and will not turn to the Strong for strength. To cure them of that evil, you must grind them to powder; you must do with them what Solomon says concerning the fool, bray them "in a mortar among wheat with a pestle," before you can get this folly of supposed self-strength out of them. Even, then, sometimes, every atom of their ground and pounded being seems still to say, "I am somebody, after all." So, it is a blessed thing when God makes us to know that all our power is gone.

Is my text true concerning any of you? "Their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." Are you brought to such a pass that *you have not anything in the whole world that you dare to rely upon?* You look back upon all your church-going and your chapel-going, but you dare not rely upon them, for you feel that you have

been a hypocrite in the house of God, and that your heart has not been right towards him. You look back upon your attempts to pray,—for you have been trying to pray lately,—but you feel as if you could not pray aright, the words stuck in your throat, and the very desires were dead within your spirit. Have you come to such a pass that, when you read the Bible, it condemns you; and when you hear the gospel, the preacher seems as if he excluded you from its provisions? Is it so? Is there no ray of hope for you anywhere? You used to have some kind of hope in reserve, some secret, mysterious confidence that still buoyed you up: is that all gone? Do you realize that you are lost? Do you know that the sentence of death has been pronounced against you? Do you even begin to wonder why it has not been executed? Do you seem to feel in your heart the working of the Spirit, as if even now he would take you away, and cast you into hell? Blessed be the Lord if you have come to such a pass as that! Your extremity is God's opportunity. The difficulty all along has been to get to the end of you; for when a man gets to the end of himself, he has reached the beginning of God's working. When you are cleaned right out, and have not anything at all left, then all the mercy of the covenant of grace is yours. I may have doubts about whether God's grace will be exercised in certain cases; but I cannot raise any question about the freeness of divine grace to a soul that is empty, to a soul that is ready to perish, to a soul that is enquiring after God, to a soul that is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If you, poor sinner, are covered with leprosy from head to foot; if, though the priest should thoroughly examine you, he would have to declare that there is not one sound speck in you even of the size of a pin's head, let me tell you what the law itself says,—*you are clean;* therefore, go your way. When once your soul is so conscious of your sin that every hope of salvation by your own works is entirely abandoned, and you feel that you are utterly condemned, then is Jesus Christ yours, for he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners. So, accept him as yours; take him, receive him now. He is made of God fulness to our emptiness, righteousness to our unrighteousness, life to our death, salvation to our condemnation, all in all to our poverty, our wretchedness, our sin.

Now let me read the text to you yet once more, and see if God the Holy Spirit does not press it home upon your conscience and heart: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." There is no hope for you except in the pity of God, no hope except in his mercy, and no hope of mercy except in the freeness of his mercy; and no hope even of the freeness of mercy except in the sovereignty of God, who hath mercy on those upon whom he will have mercy, and who gives his grace to the most unworthy, that it may be proved to be all the greater grace because it saves the very chief of sinners. If there is one of you who says, "I am the most unlikely man in all the world ever to be saved; I have the least claim upon God of any man that lives; the only claim I have is the right to be damned, for I have so grievously

transgressed against God; I feel myself to be so guilty, that my only claim upon justice is the demand to be tried, condemned, and executed;"—if you really mean what you say, then you are the man to whom the gospel of the grace of God is specially sent, for it is written, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good (a benevolent) man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He gave himself for our sins, not for our righteousness; and he himself said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Trust Christ, thou who darest not trust thyself. Fling thyself, all broken to pieces, at the feet of the broken-hearted Saviour, and he will turn again, and have compassion upon you. Yea, look unto him, and live, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee."

Give but one believing glance at that dear dying Son of God, and thou shalt hear him say to thee, "Go thy way; thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." The Lord grant it, for his name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 1—43.

Verse 1. *Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.*

Because men are so slow of hearing, Moses calls on the heavens and the earth to bear witness against them; and because of the sublimity of his subject, he calls upon the heavens and the earth to pay attention to it.

2. *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:*

It is good preaching, and good hearing, too, when the gospel comes like a gentle shower which saturates and soaks into the soil, and refreshes and makes it fruitful. May God the Holy Spirit make it to be so whenever we gather together for worship! The Word of the Lord may be as a driving hail, breaking everything upon which it falls, and so becoming the savour of death unto death. But may God make it to us as the dew and the small rain from heaven, that it may be a savour of life unto life!

3—5. *Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves,—*

What a contrast there is between the incorruptible and immutable God and corruptible man! "They have corrupted themselves,"—

5. *Their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.*

God's children have spots,—the spots caused by sin, which are recognized, mourned over, and struggled against by them; the ungodly have the same sort of spots, but they have no repentance concerning the sin which causes them.

6. *Do ye thus requite the* LORD, *O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*

Sin is the basest form of ingratitude. We owe everything to God, and we ought therefore to treat him as our Creator and Father should be treated. On the contrary, how often have we requited him evil for good, and acted as if we regarded him as our enemy rather than as our best Friend!

7, 8. *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*

His first thought was concerning his own people. He provided Canaan for them; it was just the very land for them, with space enough, and yet with not too much room, so that they might cultivate it all, and prove it to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet these special thoughts of God, with regard to his own chosen people, did not exclude kind thoughts towards the rest of mankind, for "he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people," that is, the people belonging to other nations; but, still, his deepest and his highest thoughts were concerning the children of Israel.

9, 10. *For the* LORD'S *portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.*

And is not this also a true description of God's love and kindness to you and to me, beloved in the Lord? Did he not find us in the wilderness? Has he not led us about, and by our experience instructed us, and has he not guarded us with as much watchful care as a man bestows upon the apple of his eye? Oh, blessed be his holy name, we owe everything to him! He giveth us everything that we have.

11—14. *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the* LORD *alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.*

God fed his ancient people with the best of the best, and gave it to them with no stinted hand; and, oh! when I think of the spiritual food which God has prepared for his people, surely "butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs," and all such carnal things are but poor in comparison with the provisions of his grace. In a spiritual sense, the Lord hath indeed given to us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

But now look again at the contrast between the Lord and his ancient people. God's great goodness makes man's sin appear all the blacker:—

15. *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

Many can endure the trials of adversity who cannot escape the perils of prosperity. Solomon truly said, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise;" and many a man has failed in that time of testing. When you come to be wealthy, to be admired, to receive honour among men, then is the time of your severest trial.

16, 17. *They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.*

Moses multiplies expressions to show the folly of Israel's idolatry. Only think of "new gods that came newly up," as if that which is new could be a god! The same thing may be said of the "new truth" of which we hear so much nowadays. That which is new cannot be true. Certainly, there is nothing new in theology but that which is utterly false.

The idols, which the Israelites worshipped, were not only new gods, but they were strange gods, which their fathers feared not. Worse than that, they were demons: "they sacrificed unto devils, not to God." How low had even the chosen people sunk!

18—27. *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the* LORD *saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not—*

Here is a sweet word of grace amid the just judgments of Jehovah: "Were it not"—

27. *That I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the* LORD *hath not done all this.*

So he spared them for his own name's sake; and, to this day, when God can find no other reason for showing mercy to the guilty, he does it for his name's sake; and this is a blessed plea to be urged by a man who can see no reason why God should have mercy upon him. He may say, "Lord, do it for thy name's sake, to make thy grace and thy mercy illustrious, in the salvation of such a poor, hopeless wretch as I am."

28—32. *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the* LORD *had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine—*

That is, the vine of God's enemies,—

32—34. *Is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?*

What a striking and startling question that is, as though God laid up the memory of man's sin, sealed it up, and kept it in a secret place against the day when he shall call sinners to account, and visit them for their iniquities! What an awful thing it is to have the sins of one's youth laid

up, sealed up, and put away in God's treasury; and the sins of middle life, and perhaps the sins of old age, too, to be brought out, by-and-by, and laid to our charge! Who shall be able to stand in that great day? Only those who are washed in the blood and robed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord.

35—38. *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the* LORD *shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.*

To you who trust in anything except God, the day will come when you will hear such terrible words as these—"Now let your riches save you, let your pleasures and your vices cheer you; go ye now in your own wicked ways, and see if you can find any comfort in them!" What holy sarcasm there is in these words, which will cut to the quick the conscience when it is once fairly aroused!

39—43. *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.*

It is only in mercy, you see, that the Lord deals with his people; they cannot stand before him on the ground of justice, but in his mercy is their place of refuge. May we all find that mercy by fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in Christ Jesus and his glorious gospel! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—406, 544, 538.

THE

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THE TENSES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 17TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, May 13th, 1880.

"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."—2 Corinthians i. 10.

WHEN children are learning their grammar, they have to pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs; and it is important for Christians also to remember their tenses,—to recollect the past, the present, and the future. Our text brings all three very vividly before us, and reminds us that God hath delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver.

First, let us think for a little while concerning the past. How old art thou, my friend? How many of thy years hast thou employed profitably, and how many hast thou allowed to run to waste? For how many years hast thou wrought the will of the flesh, and been a servant of sin and Satan? How long hast thou been born again? What is thine age spiritually? Take down the record of thy life, and examine it, from the days of thy childhood, through youth and early manhood, up till now. It is a book which should do us good to read; in some respects, all its pages may make us weep; and yet, viewed in another light, many of them may give us cause to sing. This is the one book in the library that many people do not like to take down and read, for there are so many blots in it, and so many humbling records; yet "God requireth that which is past," and it is a token of wisdom for a man to talk with his past years, and to learn from them the many lessons they are able to teach. All the days we have lived will go before us to the judgment seat, and each one will bear its record, and leave it there; so let us not be oblivious of that which God remembers, but let us recollect it that we may be penitent for all that has been wrong in it, and that we may be grateful for all that has been right.

Next, think about the second part of life, namely, the time present; and here let me urge upon you, dear friends, the importance of valuing the present. In fact, time present is the only time

that you have. The past has gone, and you cannot recall it; the future will never really be yours, for, when it comes, it will be present, too. It is only in the present that we live; so that, if we waste these precious hours that are with us now, we waste all that we have. If we serve not God to-day, when will we serve him? To-morrow? Nay, for when that opportunity comes, "to-morrow" will have been changed into "to-day." Let us endeavour, as God shall help us, even to watch our moments so as not to waste one of them. It is a good thing to have our life divided up into short periods. The other day, I saw John Wesley's diary, or rather, horary, for it had in it not merely an entry for every day, but for every hour; and not only for every hour, but usually there was a distinct occupation for every twenty minutes. The good man made his days to have many hours in them, and his hours seemed to have more minutes in them than most men's hours have, because he did not waste any of them, but diligently used them all in his Master's service. God help us all to do the same by paying great attention to the present portion of our life!

As for the future, there is an idle curiosity which prompts men to try to live in it; that we must renounce. But there is a gracious expectation which enables us to live in it, a holy anxiety which prompts us to prepare for it. It is greatly wise for us to talk with those years that are to come if we talk with them in view of their end. I would have you familiar with your graves, for you will soon be in them; and more familiar still with your resurrection dwelling-place, remembering that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Let us often project ourselves beyond the present into the future; to gather strength from the future, is frequently the best way to deal with the present. You will be able more easily to bear your present burdens when you think how short is the time in which you will have to carry them. Your "light affliction, which is but for a moment," will seem scarcely like a feather's weight to you when you anticipate the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which God hath prepared for you.

I recommend to you, therefore, this rule of three, and advise you always to consider the past, the present, and the future; and just now I invite you to do so in connection with the delivering mercy of God. He *hath* delivered us; he *doth* deliver us; he *will* deliver us. And, first, I am going to point out to you *three trains of thought;* next, *three lines of argument;* and, thirdly, *three inferences.*

I. First, THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.

The first is this, *memory, which tells us of the deliverances in the past:* "who delivered us from so great a death." Take the words exactly as Paul wrote them, and recall how God has delivered some of us from death. A few here, perhaps, have been very near to death in battle or in tempest; many more of us have been very near to death in sickness. Some of us have several times in our lives looked into eternity; our illness has been no child's play, and we have realized the possibility, or even the probability of our soon

passing away from all the engagements of this mortal life, and standing before our God. But we have been raised up again; we have come forth from our chamber, tottering on our staff, perhaps, through weakness, yet we are still preserved, the living, the living, to praise the Lord, as we do this day. I have no doubt that almost all of you have had, at one time or another, some very special proof that "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

Our past deliverances, however, have not only been from physical death; we have had greater deliverances than that. There was, first of all, our deliverance from spiritual death. Do you not remember the time, dear brother, dear sister, when you were brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light? You say that you do not know the day when this great change took place; never mind if you do not, it is not at all essential if you can now say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Some of us do remember the very day when we came to Christ, and rested in him; and we do, with our whole heart and soul, bless him that we were delivered from that terrible death which had so long held us in captivity. God rescued us by his grace, and enabled us to come forth from our grave of sin, looking unto Jesus, and longing to be made like him.

Further, some of you remember when you were delivered from despair. It is an awful thing to be driven away from all hope of salvation, and to be at your wits' end. You were not all brought to Christ in a terrible tempest, as some of us were; many of you came to him under happier circumstances. Be very thankful that it was so; but some of us were hard put to it when we tried to touch the hem of his garment, we were pressed and crushed in the crowd, and seemed to lose our very breath. I remember how, when I was under conviction of sin, my soul rolled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man; yet the Lord delivered me, and taught me to rest upon him, and thus even full assurance became possible although I had thought, aforetime, that mercy could never reach me. Beloved, if I am describing your experience as well as my own, let us together bless the Lord for his mercy in delivering us from so great a death. The remembrance of our deliverance from sin and despair must take the first rank amongst our grateful reminiscences.

But, since then, have you not been many times delivered out of temptation? You said, with the psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" yet the Lord graciously preserved you. If you look back with careful eye, you will see many occasions where, if it had not been for interposing mercy, you would either have fallen into the bog on your right hand, or into the quagmire on your left. If the Lord had not piloted your vessel, it would have been wrecked on the rocks of Scylla or engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis. Do you not wonder, sometimes, how you ever got through that peculiar temptation, which was so suitable to your circumstances, and so fascinating to your flesh? Yet you did not know, at the time, that it was a temptation; and you had not the wisdom necessary to meet the craft of Satan; yet

you were not taken captive in the Satanic net, cunningly as it was spread; and for that deliverance you must bless the name of the Lord. There are some of you who ought to praise him for deliverances over which you wept at the time. He would not let you have what you desired; you were disappointed, and you talked about your heart being broken. Ah! but the Lord's dealings with you saved you from having a broken heart. You said, "Alas! alas! I have lost something which I fondly cherished." It was well that you did lose it, for that which you thought was a bracelet sparkling with jewels was a viper, which, had you grasped it, would have stung you to death. Blessed be God for not hearing some of our prayers! Blessed be the Lord for not gratifying many of our desires!

We ought to praise him, too, for our deliverances in the time of trouble. You are not all tried alike. I am very thankful that some of you are not troubled as others are; but I know that I am addressing some whose trials have been very many and very heavy. Your road has been a very rough one. John Bunyan truly says, "A Christian man is seldom long at ease; when one trouble's gone, another doth him seize;" and that has been true in the lives of many of us. We can say, with the psalmist. "We went through fire and through water." Some of God's children have been brought very low in their circumstances, so that they have had to live "from hand to mouth,"—though I do not know that many of us live very differently from that;—but there are some godly people who never have any reserve store even if they do not actually come to want. I do not know that there is anything very grievous in that, for the sparrows and the ravens live in that style, yet God cares for them. But some of you find it to be a trial to have scantiness in the home, or sickness in your own person, or one who is dear to you as your own life constantly afflicted. There are all sorts of losses and crosses, trials and troubles, for the godly to endure. Yes; but none of these things have crushed us yet, for the Lord hath delivered us. Here is a poor widow, and she wonders how she ever brought up that large family of little children. She scarcely knew how to provide for them all when she had a husband, and yet, when the head of the house was gone, they were provided for; it is very wonderful, yet it was done; and you, who seemed to see all your prospects suddenly dissolve, like the mirage of the desert, were helped. You said, at one time, "If such-and-such a thing should happen, it would kill me." It did happen, yet it did not kill you, for you are here to testify to the Lord's delivering mercy. One Job's messenger after another came to bring you evil tidings, yet the Lord delivered you from the trials which threatened to crush you. I cannot stay to mention all those past deliverances; and, probably, most of them are not even known to us. Glory be to God for unknown mercies,—favours which came in the night when we most needed them, favours which helped us to sleep and to awake refreshed, favours that stole, with silent footfall, into our home and our heart, and went away leaving traces of the sacred oil of divine mercy behind them.

That is the first train of thought,—memory, which tells of deliverances in the past.

The second is *observation, which calls attention to present deliverance:* "and *doth* deliver." Open your eyes, my brethren and sisters, and see how God is delivering you at this moment. I do not say that, with the most widely opened eye, you will perceive all your deliverances; for, many times, you have been saved from trouble, while, on other occasions, you have been delivered out of it. I have often told you the story of the good old Puritan who met his son at a half-way house. When the young man came in, he said, "Father, I had a very special providence as I rode here to-day." "What was that, my son?" "My horse stumbled three times very badly, yet I was not thrown." "And I have had an equally special providence in riding here." "What was that?" "My horse never stumbled all the way, so I was not thrown." You know that, if we are in a railway accident, and escape from any hurt, we say, "What a providence!" Yes, but what a providence it was when you were preserved from a railway accident by stopping at home! Oftentimes, we do not see the very thing that has the most of mercy in it. What evidences of divine deliverance there are in the fact that you are here at this moment! A comparatively trifling incident might have resulted in your death. You may be, tomorrow morning, in doubt as to which of two ways you should take; but there will be the providence of God directing you which to choose, and your choice of that one may affect the whole of the rest of your life.

If you are not just now being assailed by any temptation, it is because God is delivering you from it. Yet it may be that Satan is planning some fresh temptation with which to assail you; but, though he desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. We might have fallen into doctrinal error had it not been for God's restraining mercy. How apt thoughtful people are to be carried away by the particular novelty of the hour! It seems as if they could not resist the cogency of the argument by which the new teaching is supported, but we have been kept from yielding to it by having our hearts established in the faith, so that we have not believed every novel doctrine, but have judged it by the Word of God, and so have been kept from wandering into devious ways.

How graciously God is preserving many of us from the tongue of slander! It is a wonderful thing for any man to live much in public without being accused of some vile crime; and the woman who lives in the most retired position, the housewife who does nothing but look after her own children, will find somebody or other slandering her. You cannot always escape from the envenomed tongue of slander, be you what you will and where you will; and for God to keep the reputation of any Christian man unstained year after year, is a subject for the greatest thankfulness.

We do not know where or what we might have been if God's gracious protection had not been like a wall of fire round about us, as it is even now, for still doth the Lord deliver all those who put

their trust in him. I want you, dear brothers and sisters, to believe with unquestioning confidence that God is delivering you just now. You know that he *has* delivered you, be quite as sure that he *is* delivering you at this moment. "Oh!" says one, "I am shut up in the dungeon of despair." Yes; but your Lord has a key that can open the door, and so let you out. "Ay; but I am in great want." But he knows all about it, and he has his basket in his hand full of good things with which he is going to supply all your needs. "Oh!" says another, "but I am sinking in the flood." But he is throwing the life-belt over you. "Oh, but I am fainting!" But he is putting a bottle of sweet perfume to your nose to refresh your spirit. God is near thee, to revive and cheer thy fainting soul. Perhaps someone says, "I find faith concerning the past and concerning the ultimate future tolerably easy; but it is faith for the next hour or two I cannot so readily exercise." At certain times, it is found that trial is peculiarly present, but one cannot always realize that God is "a very present help in trouble;" yet it is true. He hath delivered, and he doth deliver.

The third train of thought is this,—*expectation looks out of the window upon the future:* "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Yes, dear friends, there may be many trials before you yet; but there is a mass of mercy laid up in store to meet those trials. Troubles such as you have never yet known, as well as repetitions of those you have experienced, will surely come upon you; but as your days are, so shall your strength be, for your Lord will continue to deliver you. As the eyes gradually fail, and the limbs grow weak, and the infirmities of age creep over us, we are apt to be distressed; yet our Lord will not forsake us. When severe sickness invades our mortal frame, and our pains are multiplied and intensified, we wonder how we shall hold out to the end; and especially as we look forward to the time of death,—not always viewing it in the true light, we say, "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? How shall we be able to bear the stern realities of our last hours?" Be of good comfort, my brother, my sister; he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver. As surely as the trial comes, the way of escape shall be opened up for you by your Lord. Will you try to realize all this of which I have been speaking? He *hath* delivered you; then, give him your gratitude: he *is* delivering you; then, give him your confidence: he *will* deliver you; then, give him a full and joyful expectation, and begin even now to praise him for mercies which are yet to come, and for grace which you have not tasted yet, but which you shall taste in his good time.

II. Now, in the second place, THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT, all running to the same point.

The point to be proved is that the Lord will deliver his people; and I argue that *he will deliver us in the future because he has already begun to deliver us.* There is a chain of continuity here; he hath delivered, he doth deliver, and he will deliver. He began to work for our deliverance long before we sought him. The first movement was not from us to God, but from God to us. We were

lying dead in trespasses and sins, and he came and quickened us. He gave his Son to die for us many centuries before we were born; he provided the gospel for us long before you and I had ever sinned; in all things he had the start, and was beforehand with us. Yet he need not have done all this, except that it was by his own choice and free will that he acted. I do rejoice in the free will of God which moved him to deliver us.

Surely, then, since the motive that impelled him to save us must have been in himself alone, that motive is still there. If he had begun to deliver us because he saw some goodness in us, or because we first applied to him, then he might leave us after all; but as the commencement was with himself, out of his own heart, spontaneously, depend upon it that, as he began the work, he will carry it on. God has no more knowledge of any one of us than he had at the first. When he began with us, he knew what we should be; foresaw all our sins and all our follies, all our ingratitude and all our backsliding. He did not enter, blindfold, upon a task which, after second thoughts, he would have to relinquish; but, even from eternity, he saw us just as we have turned out to be. Yet he began with us; and having begun with the deliberation of eternal love, let us be quite sure that he will prosecute his gracious purpose with the perseverance of eternal love. If there had been, at the first, some reason in us why God should begin to deliver us, then, that reason being removed from us, God might cease to deliver us; but as the reason was not in us, but in himself, since he can never change, the reason for our deliverance abides the same, and the argument is good and clear,—God *hath* delivered us, then he *will* deliver us.

The next argument comes from the fact that, *as he is now delivering us, therefore he will continue to do so.* Here is the continuity of his grace. Now look, beloved; he has, up to this hour, continued to deliver you and me who have trusted him. How many times has he delivered me? Out of how many troubles have I been delivered? From how many sins have I been delivered? Well, then, if the Lord has kept on delivering me so long, I argue that, if he had ever meant to stop, he would have stopped before now; and, therefore,—

> **"His love in time past forbids me to think**
> **He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;**
> **Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,**
> **Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."**

When a man begins to build, we reckon that he will finish the building if he can. We know that our God can complete what he has commenced, so we conclude that he will do so. I feel that he has gone so far with me that he cannot give me up now.

> **"Can he have taught me to trust in his name,**
> **And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"**

No, that can never be; and many of you must feel just as I do about this matter. Some of you are, as it were, sitting on the very doorstep of heaven; you are over eighty years of age, so you cannot be here long; cannot you trust the Lord for the few months or years you have yet to live? He has been helping you, my aged sister,

ever since you were a girl; and he has delivered you out of all sorts of troubles, do you think that he will leave you now? And my dear venerable brother, you knew the Lord when you were but a boy, and he has never left you yet; will he forsake you now? No; blessed be his name, he will not! All those years of his favour go to confirm us in the conviction that he will keep on delivering us till he brings us safely home.

The Lord has not only delivered us so often, but he has also done it in such a wonderful way, that he must go on working in a similar fashion. What marvellous wisdom has he sometimes displayed in delivering us from the consequences of our own folly! Often hath he seemed to lavish his mercy upon us that he might help us in our time of need, and not once has he failed us. There is not one broken promise of his, nor one covenant blessing that he has ever withheld from us. If any of you, who have known him the longest, have aught to say against your God, say it; but you have not. You have never had any reason for doubting him, nor have you ever had any suspicion of his faithfulness raised in your mind by anything that he has done which might lead you to mistrust him in the future. He *hath* delivered, he *is* delivering, and he will *yet* deliver. There are two arguments drawn from the past and the present.

The best argument, however, comes *from God himself:* "in whom we trust." He is always the same, and everything is ever present to his unchanging mind. What was the nature of God when he first determined to deliver me? Was it love? Then, it is love now. What was the motive which impelled the Son of God when he came from above, and snatched me from the deep waters? It was love, surprising love; and it is surprising love which still moves him to deliver me. Did I sing about his faithfulness, the other day? That faithfulness is just the same to-day. Have I adored his wisdom? That wisdom is not exhausted.

There is not only the same nature in God as there always was, but there is also the same unchanging purpose. You and I shift and change; and we are obliged to do so, because we make rash promises and faulty plans; but God, who is infinitely wise, always keeps to his purpose. Now, if it was his original purpose to save us,—and it must have been, or he would never have delivered us as he has done,—that purpose still stands, and shall for ever stand. Though earth's old columns bow, though heaven and earth shall pass away, as the morning rime dissolves in the beams of the rising sun, yet the decree of the immutable Jehovah shall never be changed. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

III. Time fails me, so I can only very briefly show you that THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw from it is, that *we shall always be in danger so long as we are here.* The Lord hath delivered, doth deliver, and he will deliver, so we shall always need divine deliverance while we are in this world. We must not expect here to be

ever out of gun-shot of the enemy. You may depend upon it, brethren and sisters in Christ, that you will always have tribulation as long as you are in the world, you will have trials in the flesh, you will have trials in the spirit, you will have trials from God, and trials from Satan; and if, at any time, you are a long while without any trouble, keep a good look-out for it, for it is probably on the way to you. We should always suspect some danger nigh when we perceive too much delight. When God has given us a long stretch of smooth sailing, it well behoves us to steer our vessel cautiously, and to be ready to furl our sails at any moment, for a cyclone may be upon us before we know where we are. We need not ask the Lord to send us trouble, but when it comes, let us have the grace to accept it, and to glorify God in it. While we are in this world, we shall always know that it is the world, so let us not make any mistake about the matter; the devil is the devil, the world is the world, and the flesh is the flesh. None of these things have changed, and the mercy is that God has not changed, he is still the same as ever he was. If I found that the world was not the world, I might be afraid that God was not God; but that can never be the case. So, as trials are always arising, I may fairly suspect that they always will come while this time-state lasts; but I also fully believe that God will be always the same, and that he will deliver all who trust in him.

The second inference from the text is, that *we may constantly expect a display of God's delivering grace.* The past says, "He *has* delivered;" the present says, "He *doth* deliver;" and the future says, "He will *yet* deliver." Yesterday, God was very gracious to me, I need not tell you how; to-day he has been very gracious to me; to-morrow he will be very gracious to me; and the same will be true the next day, and the next day, and the next day, until there shall be no more days, and time shall be swallowed up in eternity. Between here and heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of grace. From here to the throne of the Highest, you will have to be continually supplied with new grace from the Lord who sits on high. Dear brother, you never live a truly holy, happy, blessed day, except by divine grace. You never think a right thought, never do a right act, you never make any advance heavenward except by grace. I like to think that it is so, that every day I am a monument of mercy; that every day a fresh display of sovereign grace is made to me; every day my Father feeds me, my Saviour cleanses me, the Comforter sustains me. Every day, new manifestations of the lovingkindness of the Lord break forth upon my wondering soul, and give me fresh visions of his miraculous love. I could not find another word to express what I wanted to say, that one seemed to leap into my mouth just then,—his *miraculous* love! And so it is, miracle-working love, making the Christian's life to be a series of miracles, at which angels shall gaze for ever in astonished adoration of the amazing love of God to guilty men. So I reckon that we may go onward with great confidence; for, although every day will bring dangers, every day will also witness divine deliverances.

Thirdly, the last inference I draw from the text is, that *our whole life should be filled with praise of God our Deliverer.* How doth it run? He delivered us, and now we deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He delivered us; he doth deliver us;—but what about the future? We must deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He hath delivered; he doth deliver; and *he will yet deliver;*—the same Person, working in the beginning, in the centre, and at the close. It is all of God from first to last; there is not one deliverance which you have ever had which you can ascribe to anyone but the Lord alone. Inside heaven's gate, all the praise is given to the Triune Jehovah: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;" and outside heaven's gate, let us sing the same song, to the same tune; let it always be to the praise of grace, *grace*, GRACE; to the God of grace, the Father of grace, the Christ of grace, the Holy Ghost and his grace; and to God be all the glory, for ever and for ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 733, 735.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS XVI. AND LXIII.

Psalm xvi. Verse 1. *Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.*

Ah, brethren! when we think of our daily dangers, and when we remember the sinfulness of our nature, this petition may well be our frequent prayer: "Preserve me, O God;" and this may well be our plea, as well as the psalmist's: "for in thee do I put my trust." We do trust in the name of the Lord, for we can never expect to be preserved except by his protecting grace.

2, 3. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*

"My God, I would fain prove my gratitude to thee if I could; but what can I do for One so great as thou art? Thou art infinitely above me; thou needest nothing at my hands. What, then, can I do to show my love to thee? By my care for thy people I may prove what I would do for thee if I could. Are they hungry? I will feed them. Are they sick? I will visit them. If my goodness cannot reach the great Head of the Church, it shall at least wash the feet, for I do love thee, O my God; and I want, in some practical way, to show that I love thee!"

4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.*

He who sincerely loves the true God cannot have any regard for his rivals; he will have no communion with false gods in any shape or form.

5. *The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:*

That is the believer's portion,—his God. The Levites, as a tribe, had no inheritance in the land of Canaan; but God was their portion, and who shall dare to say that they had not the best of it? Now, child of God, if you could have your choice, what would you choose,—goods or God? Earthly wealth, or the God who is the source of all good things?

5. *Thou maintainest my lot.*

One of our great men has for his motto, "I will maintain it." But the psalmist's is a much better one: "Thou maintainest my lot." It is better to have God for our Guardian than to have all possible human strength with which to defend ourselves.

6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*

The Jewish rulers stretched the measuring or dividing lines over the plots of land that fell to the different members of the family; but here the man of God declares that, since God was his portion, the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places. There is no choice of places, or times, or circumstances, with the man who thoroughly loves his God. He can find God in loneliness, and so enjoy the best company. If he has God in poverty, he has great riches. O happy man, who has God to be his all!

7. *I will bless the* LORD, *who hath given me counsel:*

"He has talked with me, checked me, rebuked me, instructed me, encouraged me: 'I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel.'" That does not, at first sight, look as if it were one of the choicest of blessings, yet the psalmist mentions it immediately after he has declared that the lines have fallen unto him in pleasant places,—as if he felt that one of the choicest blessings of the covenant was that God had been his Counsellor.

7. *My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.*

"God makes my heart, my conscience, my inmost being, to give me instruction." What a blessing that must have been to David! A man who has no inward monitor, because he has stifled his conscience, so that it no longer holds him by the ear, and speaks with him, is poor indeed; but blessed is he who has his God and his conscience to counsel and instruct him.

8. *I have set the* LORD *always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

Brother, have you always acted on the straight? Have you so conducted your business that you need not be ashamed for God himself to look at it? Then do not be afraid of anything that may happen to you, for you will come out all right at the last. There may be great trouble in store for you, and you may be stripped of all that you possess; but you shall never be ashamed.

9. *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.*

Every good thing belongs to the man who belongs to God. He need not be afraid even of the grave, for he can adopt the language which is here prophetically used for Christ himself. He is not afraid to die, for he can say:—

10. *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;*

"Sheol"—the place of the departed, the intermediate state into which the soul passes at death.

10. *Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

In the fullest sense, this verse belongs to Christ alone; but, still, what belongs to the Head is also the portion of the members of his mystical body.

11. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

And this is the portion of every believer. "Here little, but hereafter much," says Bunyan; but I will venture to alter it, and say, "Here much, but hereafter more shall be our inheritance from age to age."

Psalm lxiii. Verse 1. *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee:* "Because thou art mine, therefore will I seek thee." A sense of possession makes us long for the enjoyment of all that is really ours.

1. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;*

"Nothing but thyself can content me; everything else, or everyone else falls short of my desire. There is no water that can slake such a thirst as mine unless I drink from thee, thou overflowing well."

2. *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*

Past enjoyment of our Lord's presence inspires us with earnest desire for fresh manifestations of his face. If we have ever seen God's power and glory, when we have come into the courts of his house, we long to see them again, whether we are in the wilderness or in the sanctuary.

3. *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.*

Is not that word "lovingkindness" one of the noblest terms in our own or any other language? The word kin is at the root of kind and kindred, so that lovingkindness, loving-kinnedness, or loving-kinness, is such conduct as we may expect from those who are akin to us. God's kinness to us, through Jesus Christ his Son, and our Saviour, brings to us a lovingkindness that is better than life, and for which our lips can never praise him enough.

4. *Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*

"For very joy, I will lift them up, and clap them before thee. Though, aforetime, they hung down, as though I were dispirited, and could never work again, yet now, 'I will lift up my hands in thy name.'"

5. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;—*

God's flowers always bloom double. God's blessings are like marrow and fatness; there is in them a double satisfaction of the most intense kind: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;"—

5. *And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:*

The psalmist speaks as if each of his lips had a separate joy; and as though, together, they would express the double joy for the double satisfaction which his God had given to him.

6. *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

"Even then shall I have joy, for thy presence makes even the darkness to be light."

7. *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*

"If I cannot get into the light of thy countenance, the very shadow of thy wings shall make me glad. Only let me be near thee; that is all I crave."

7. *My soul followeth hard after thee:*

"I am like a dog who loves to keep close to his master's heels."

8—11. *Thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*

Stopped with a shovelful of earth, in many cases; for it seems as if some liars would never cease lying as long as they are alive.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TRUE LEARNING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 21TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, May 20th, 1880.

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."—Ephesians iv. 20, 21.

THE first two words of our text call attention to the distinction which must always be drawn between true Christians and other people: "But ye." The apostle had been writing concerning other Gentiles, and the evil lives they lived; so, to the believers at Ephesus, he said that they were not to walk as unbelievers ordinarily did. Thus we learn, at the very opening of our subject, that, if we are indeed Christians, there is a manifest distinction between us and the men of the world. I may be told that, of course, there was a great contrast between Christ's followers and the heathen who lived in the apostle's day; and some persons will, perhaps, say that we cannot expect that there should be the same difference now between Christian men and unbelievers. I reply that there may be a variation as to the outward form of that contrast; but, essentially, it must be quite as true and real.

Someone was asking, the other day, how it was that the church, nowadays, was not so separate from the world as it used to be; and one who heard the question suggested that, possibly, the world had grown better; but another more truly said that, probably, the church had grown worse. There are two ways of our coming together;—the world may rise to our proper height, or we may descend to the world's level. Well, now, I am quite certain that candour requires us to say that, in some respects, the condition of society is much better than it was. There are some of the grosser vices, which were common enough fifty years ago, which are now held in general reprobation. To a very considerable extent, Christianity has leavened society; men are not, as a rule, so coarsely vicious as they were in the days of our grandsires; yet, after making all the abatement I possibly can on that score, I cannot help feeling that the difference between the church and the world has been mainly changed by the church coming down from what it used to

be. I wish we were as liable to be called fanatics as the first Methodists were, simply because men judged us to be as earnest as they were; I should be glad if we were as worthy to be called Puritans as were the men of the days of Dr. John Owen and Oliver Cromwell. For my part, I think that, nowadays, we are not Puritanic enough, or precise enough; and, without any hesitation, we may make the assertion, which we are sure God's Word will support, that whatever improvements there may be in the world, there must always be a marked distinction between the children of God and the seed of the serpent. There can never be a time in which death and life will be exactly alike, nor a season in which darkness will be the same thing as light. We must still, to the end of the chapter, be either born of God, born from above, or else continue to lie under the power of Satan; we must either be dead in trespasses and sins or else be quickened by divine grace; we must either have passed from nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, or else we are still abiding in that darkness.

You must also recollect, my brethren, whoever you may be, that if there is no distinction between you and the world around you, you may be certain that you are of the world; for, in the children of God, there must always be some marks to distinguish them from the rest of mankind, so that we can contrast them with the ungodly, and address to them the words of our text, "But ye have not so learned Christ." There is a something in them which is not to be found in the best worldling, something which is not to be discovered in the most admirable carnal man; a something in their character which can be readily perceived, and which marks them as belonging to another and a higher race, the twice-born, the elect of God, eternally chosen by him, and therefore made to be choice ones through the effectual working of his grace. Note this fact at the very commencement of our meditation, that there is a clear distinction between Christians and all other people.

Further, it appears from the text that the great means of this distinction is our being made into disciples to be taught of God, for the apostle says, "But ye have not so learned Christ." So that it is something which we have learned that makes us different from the rest of mankind. In our spiritual life, the first essential is conversion. This great change is like the turning of the helm, which makes the boat head up in a new direction; but conversion is not everything. After the boat is turned, it has to be rowed, or else it will drift down the stream. If a man becomes Christ's disciple by conversion, he must remain Christ's disciple, throughout the rest of his life, by sitting at his Master's feet, and receiving instruction from him; for it is only as we are taught of God that we shall be able to keep up the high spiritual distinction between ourselves and the rest of mankind. We are under the tutorship of the Holy Spirit; he has taken us into his school; he has taught us something already, he is teaching us more now, and he will keep on teaching us more and more till we shall know even as we are known.

I want, at this time, as his divine power rests upon me, to try to speak a little, first, upon *our lesson:* "ye have not so learned

Christ;" secondly, I will say something upon *how we have not learned that lesson:* "ye have not so learned Christ;" and then, thirdly, I will endeavour to tell you *how we have learned it.* We have learned it in this fashion: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."

I. First, then, we are to think about THE CHRISTIAN'S LESSON: "Ye have not so learned Christ."

It is a very uncommon expression which the apostle here employs, for it is not usual to learn a person; yet Paul says, "Ye have not so learned Christ," by which he did not mean merely learning the doctrine of Christ. Many a man knows what Christ taught, and yet has not learned Christ. He has read the Bible, he may even have studied it after a fashion, and may know what orthodox doctrine is, so that he does not care to hear any other; he could stand up and tell you very correctly what the teachings of Jesus Christ are, yet he has not learned Christ. It is quite right that we should learn the teachings of Christ, and value every word that he has spoken; still, that is not the main lesson that the Christian has to learn.

Nor is it merely learning Christ's precepts; for we might learn them all, and yet not have learned the one lesson that is essential to our Christian life, which is, to learn Christ. Some men are very earnest, and rightly so, to learn all the ceremonies that Christ has taught us. There are not many of those ceremonies, and people make great mistakes concerning them, notwithstanding their earnest zeal to be correct; but, supposing a man should know all about believers' baptism and the Lord's supper, according to their Scriptural mode and meaning, still, that is not the lesson spoken of in the text. Neither doctrines, nor precepts, nor ordinances will suffice as the life-lesson of a Christian; it is the blessed person of our Lord that we must learn.

Paul also meant a great deal more than merely learning about Christ. I think the distinction will readily strike you. A man may know much about Christ, whose Son he is, what work he came to do, what he is still doing, and what he will yet do at his glorious appearing; he may know sufficient about Christ to be able to be a teacher of others, and to be reckoned a theologian; and yet, for all this, he may never have learned Christ. That is quite another thing. I know much about many people so far as their history can be known by a stranger to them, yet I do not know them; I have never spoken to them, I have never even seen them. There are many persons, I am sure, of whom you can truly say that you know everything that can be known about them; for their whole career is so well known, and you have been told so much concerning them; yet you do not know them; to use Paul's word, you have never "learned" them. Beware, then, of being satisfied with knowing about Christ, for the life-lesson of a Christian is to know him,—to learn him. What does this mean?

It means, first, that you and I must *know him as a personal Christ.* We must know him as being a real Saviour, actually existing, to whom we have come, with whom we have spoken, and who has also

spoken to us, and of whose existence we can have no manner of doubt, because we know him, and are known of him. It does not mean that he is so little known to us that we can just detect and discover him; but that we have so learned him that we know him,—know his heart, know his voice, know that secret of the Lord which only he can reveal, and which he tells to none but those who are truly his own. This is the very essence of true religion,—personally living with a personal Saviour, personally trusting a personal Redeemer, personally crying out to a personal Intercessor, and receiving personal answers from a Person who loves us, and who manifests himself to us as he does not unto the world. To many people, Christ is only a name to bow at, not a person to embrace. To some, Christ is merely the name by which they designate their religion, such as it is; but to us, beloved, I trust that he is much more than a name,—"a living, bright reality," who abides with us, and in whom also we abide.

Next to this realization of his personality, and the entering into communion with him, learning Christ means *knowing his nature.* As long as we have known Christ, we have known that he is Divine; indeed, many of us knew that before we really and savingly knew him. Since we were little children, we never had any question about Jesus Christ being "very God of very God;" and if anybody had called us Socinians or Unitarians, we should have been deeply grieved, because we always held the doctrine of his Divinity; but, now, we know that he is God, for "his eternal power and Godhead" have been proved in our spirit; he has taken away from us a mass of sin which none but God could have removed; he has breathed peace into us, even the peace of God which passeth all understanding; he has helped us when we have been staggering under a burden too heavy for us to bear, and he has borne it for us as none but God could have done. Our Lord Jesus has not only revealed himself to us, but he has also made our true selves known to ourselves by that omniscient power which dwells in none but God, and we have said to him as emphatically as Thomas did when he put his finger into the print of the nails, "My Lord and my God." I never care to read any arguments about the Deity of Christ; I should as soon think of reading a book which sought to prove the existence of my mother. This is a matter which I know for myself; I have tried it, and proved it, and felt its power.

As to the humanity of Christ, beloved friends, we always knew that he was human. I suppose that none of us ever had a doubt about that as a matter of head knowledge; but, now, we know him to be human because we have been with him. He has felt for us as none but a brother born for adversity could feel. He has looked at us, sometimes, in our griefs, with such an eye as no angel ever had; and only such a wondrous Person as the Son of Mary, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, would have given us such a look as we have received from him; and he has spoken home to our heart words of such matchless tenderness as only one who was akin to us, and who had been tempted in all points like as we are, could ever have invented, and uttered to us. Just as truly as we know

him to be God, we also know him to be man. It is not now to us a matter of doctrine alone; it is not a matter needing to be proved, we do not now desire even Scriptural proof, for we have seen him ourselves, we have spoken with him personally; and now we not only believe his Word, but our own heart has proved and tested beyond all question that he is Emmanuel,—God with us. I hope I have made plain the distinction between knowing doctrinally that Christ is God and man, and personally learning him in his combined nature.

The next part of the lesson we have to learn is, *to know Christ in his various offices.* Did they not tell us, in our first Sunday-school, that Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King? Yes, and from our childhood's days we believed that he was all that; but now, beloved, many of us know that he is a Prophet, for, as I have already observed, he has read our hearts, and he has told us things that none but a prophet of God could know; he has revealed the condition of our hearts to us, he has shown us our sins, he has discovered our needs, and he has also supplied those needs, and restored peace to us, and brought us to himself, and revealed to us the truth of God as we were able to bear it.

We have no question also concerning his priesthood. We always did believe in it, but now we have learned it in another fashion. Not long ago, some of us stood, covered with filth from head to foot, and we heard one sing,—

> "There is a fountain filled with blood,
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins:
> And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
> Lose all their guilty stains;"—

and we came to that fountain, and were plunged beneath that flood, and we lost all our guilty stains. By faith, we saw the Lord Jesus, as our great High Priest, standing at the altar, and offering himself as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and now that he has taken away our sins, and our conscience has a sweet rest in a sense of acceptance in the Beloved, we have learned Christ's priesthood, not only out of the Book, but because the blood of his atonement has been sprinkled upon us. God has seen the blood, and has passed over us; the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, has cleansed us from all sin, that blood has brought us nigh to God, and at this very hour it is speaking to our heart better things than the blood of Abel ever spake; and, thus, we have learned Christ as our Priest.

It is the same with his kingship; some of us never doubted that Christ is a King, we were brought up to believe it; but, in a much higher sense, we feel him to be our King now. We have bowed our willing neck to his gracious rule, and we can feel him reigning over our stubborn but subdued lusts, which would never have been conquered, and we ourselves should never have been led into happy captivity except through his gracious sovereignty; and, now, we do rejoice that, within our spirit, we have learned Christ for ourselves, and we know him as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Dear hearers, can you follow me in all this? Do you know anything experimentally concerning what I have been saying? Perhaps some of you do not; and that is not altogether surprising, for there is many "a master of Israel," like Nicodemus, who knows not these things. It is one thing to be a fluent talker about theological truths, but it is quite another thing to know Christ personally, to lay hold of him by faith so as to be able to say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." Where that declaration is true, there is more in it than in all the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero. Doctors of divinity may know many things, and yet not have learned Christ; but he who has learned Christ has been taught of God.

This blessed instruction will go further still, dear friends, when we come *to know Christ as to his character*. I advise you all frequently to read the life of Christ as it is recorded by the four Evangelists; that is the best "Life of Christ" that ever was written, or ever will be; and all the rest of the "Lives of Christ" might as well be burnt; for you can get a better idea of Christ's life from the four Gospels than from all other books put together. If you read aright the life of Christ as it is recorded in the Inspired Word, you will be struck with it, and delighted with it; and if you are a candid person, you must be charmed with it; but you will never truly learn it until God the Holy Spirit renews your own heart, and teaches you to love it, and makes you to be like Christ himself was. A man has not learned writing till he can write, and a man has not fully learned Christ till he lives like Christ; and that fact puts many of us on a very low form in the school of the Divine Teacher. If a man wants to learn a trade, he will have to do a great deal beside walking in and out of a workshop, and seeing how everybody else does certain things; he who properly learns a trade must learn it himself by practically working at it, and he who really learns Christ's character is the man who himself has Christ's character, there is at least something of likeness to Christ about him. I hope I can say of many here present that they are learning Christ, and that they have learned Christ, so that, in one point and another, there is something about you which should make men say, "They have been with Jesus,"—"they have learned him." He who lies down in beds of spices will smell of their sweetness, and he who lives with Christ will soon catch the savour of Christ. This is what we are aiming at,—to learn how to write as Christ did, imitating both the upstrokes and the downstrokes that are in the perfect copy;—to learn the trade and business of holiness, after the manner in which Christ carried it on while here below. There will be, doubtless, many flaws and imperfections in our imitation of him; but, still, we shall have learned something of the sacred art of doing our Father's business, and giving ourselves up wholly to his glory. I pray that we may all practically learn Christ in this way.

When that comes to pass, and we know the character of Christ, we then come *to know the sweet influences of Christ's person*. Knowing him, we see what charms there are in him, and what power he

has over human beings under all manner of circumstances. Did you ever feel Christ's power to break the heart? You have not learned him till you know that, for he has a way of speaking in such loving tones that the heart seems broken all in pieces. Have you ever learned his power to heal the heart that he has broken? Do you know it for yourself? Has your poor broken spirit, bleeding at a thousand wounds, suddenly found an effectual remedy for its impending destruction, and rested in peace? Oh, what charms there are in Christ to all true Christians! If you have ever really learned him, you know how he can take you up out of the cold world where you are lying freezing at his door, and lift you right inside where the fire is brightly burning, and fill you with intense delight. You know how, when you are creeping along the road, he can come, and bear you up as on eagle's wings; and how, when you can scarcely stir a foot towards heaven, he can, on a sudden, make your soul like the chariots of Amminadib. Have you never felt such raptures as Paul experienced when he was caught up to the third heaven, and did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body? Have you never felt that influence of Christ which makes a man's life to become sublime, and causes his every action to become something far beyond what mortal man unaided could ever perform? Have you never known what it is, through the power of Christ, to sit with him in the heavenly places, and from that altitude to look down on all the world, and to despise it utterly as a thing for babes to play with, or as a fool's bauble, while you have revelled in the eternal glories and the infinite bliss that God has prepared for you? Read Rutherford's letters, and if you have a spiritual understanding, you will say, "This man had indeed learned Christ." He was, like a harp, responsive to Christ's lightest touch. His Master did but lay his hand upon the strings, and the music came out at once; but you and I are often like an untuned harp, even our Lord's hand brings no music out of us because we are not in a fit condition. Oh, that we might all truly know Christ, and the power of his resurrection,—ay, and the power of his glorious second coming,—and the power of his spiritual presence when he draws near to us in all his love and grace! So, dear brethren, learning Christ really comes to this,—personal acquaintance with Christ, personal knowledge of his nature and his offices, a personal experience of his power over the human heart, a personal knowledge of him by the surrender of yourself to him, and by his coming to incorporate you with himself till, as it were, Christ shall live in you, and you shall live in Christ, and you twain shall be one henceforth and evermore. There is a great deal more in this subject than I can bring out of it, but I must leave this part of it with you for your quiet meditations.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, the apostle says something about HOW WE HAVE NOT LEARNED OUR LESSON: "ye have not *so* learned Christ."

There are some peo e who say that they have learned Christ, *yet they remain just as they were before.* They say that they are Christians, yet their lives give the lie to their language. They

walk as other Gentiles walk, yet they go to godly assemblies, and they sing pious hymns. But, beloved, "ye have not so learned Christ."

Some even profess to have learned Christ *so as to make an excuse for their sin* out of the very fact that he is so ready to pardon. They think that sin is a small matter, and that it will have no serious consequences; "but ye have not so learned Christ." We never hated sin so much as we have done since we learned what it cost our Lord to put it away. There are some who say that they have learned Christ, *yet they never obey him, nor serve him, nor try to imitate him.* "Ye have not so learned Christ." God save us from a dry doctrinal knowledge of Christ! God save us from any kind of knowledge of Christ which is not in connection with true saving faith in him, and with a practical obedience to him! There are some who talk much of what they know concerning Christ, who even commit sin in his name. We have nations marching to battle, to kill and plunder and murder in the name of Christ! What did the Spaniards do, in years gone by, with the Indians, but plunder and slaughter them professedly in the name of Jesus Christ? And there are some, in nominally Christian countries to-day, who act in the same fashion. The Lord have mercy upon them! "But ye have not so learned Christ."

We have met with some people who imagine that *they cannot have their sin conquered.* They think that they will be saved, but that sin is to have the mastery over them; but we have not so learned Christ, we have learned him after this fashion, that we desire to be perfectly like him, and we believe that we shall be. We are aiming at this, and asking him, by his Spirit, to change us into his own image from glory unto glory; and we are looking forward to the day when we shall see him as he is, and shall be altogether like him. When a man enters a room where the walls are covered with mirrors, he sees his own likeness reproduced on all sides; here, and there, and there, and there; so is it with Christ in heaven; all the saints reflect his image, and he sees himself in them all. This is their glory, and it is also his glory that he has given his image to them; and it is that image which we desire to reproduce even now.

Beware, dear friends, of trying to learn Christ in any other way but this practical way of which I have been speaking. Never be satisfied with a theoretical knowledge of Christ, nor with mere head knowledge of Christ, nor with a hypocritical knowledge of Christ.

III. Now, in the third place, we will notice HOW WE HAVE LEARNED CHRIST.

I call your particular attention to the latter part of the text: "If so be that ye have heard him." *We must be taught by Christ, and by the Holy Spirit.* Dear brethren, do you say that you know Christ, that you have learned Christ? Tell me how you have learned him. "I heard our minister preach." Yes, yes; but did you hear Christ? The only way of learning Christ is this: "If so be that ye have heard *him.*" You never know Christ by merely hearing men, you must hear Christ himself. Do you not recollect

his own words, "My sheep hear my voice"? They not only hear the voice of the under-shepherd, but they hear the voice of the chief Shepherd, the good Shepherd, that great Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, and you never can know Christ unless you have thus heard him speaking personally to you. You must regard the various sayings of Christ, recorded in this Book, not merely as things written in the Bible, but as the very words of the living Christ spoken afresh to you, each time you read them, just as though they had never been uttered before.

Perhaps you say, "Well, sir, all I know of Christ, I have learned from the Bible." It is quite right that it should be so; but how did you read the Bible? Did you merely become familiar with the letter of it, and get what you could out of it by your own wit and wisdom? Then you have not yet learned Christ, for it is only as the Holy Ghost shall make the printed letter to be the very voice of Jesus Christ himself to you that you will ever truly know him. I do not see how I am to know a man to whom I have never spoken, and who has never spoken to me. He may pass my house day by day, yet if we never speak to one another, I cannot get to know him. A certain philosopher once said, "Speak, and I shall see you." So we may say to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Speak to me, Lord, and then I shall know thee." None but Christ can manifest Christ. You cannot see the sun except by its own light, neither can you see Christ except by his own light, that is, by the Holy Spirit.

Now notice the next sentence: "and have been taught by him." The Greek is "in" him: "and have been taught in him;" that is to say, *the only way of learning more of Christ is by being in fellowship with him.* It very frequently happens to me that somebody calls to see me professing to have a message from God to deliver to me; it is usually some crack-brained individual or other, who is not quite right in the upper story; but I will not receive messages that come in that fashion; if the Lord wants to say anything to me, he knows where I live. I feel inclined to talk to these people as John Bunyan did to the Quaker who went to Bedford jail, and said to him, "Friend Bunyan, the Lord has sent me with a message for thee, and I have been half over England trying to find thee." "Nay," said honest John, "thou art telling a lie, friend; for if the Lord had sent thee to me, he would have directed thee straight here. I have been in this prison for the last twelve years, and he has known all the time where I was." These roundabout, cross-country messages do not come from Christ at all. We learn him by being with him. Is it not said that, if you want to know a man, you must live with him? Mr. Whitefield was once asked the character of a certain person, but he replied, "I cannot tell you." "Why not?" the enquirer asked. "Because I have never lived with him; after I have lived with him for a while, I shall be able to tell you what I think of him." So, if you want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you must live with him. First he must himself speak to you, and afterwards you must abide in him. He must be the choice Companion of your morning hours, he must be with you throughout the day, and with

him you must also close the night; and as often as you may wake during the night, you must say, "When I awake, I am still with thee." There is no way of fully learning Christ except by being perpetually with him. I should suppose that a man, who has been in heaven five minutes, actually beholding Christ, knows more of him than the most instructed member of the assembly of divines ever learns here below. Oh, how much we shall learn of Christ in our first glimpse of him! Oh, that these eyes could behold him even now! Some people talk and write a great deal about what we shall see in heaven; but I do not pay much heed to what they say. It will be a long while before I shall want to take my eyes off my Saviour. I agree with Dr. Watts in that verse which we have often sung,—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of thy love."

We shall learn Christ faster there than we can here because we shall be always with him, and we shall see him as he is.

The last part of the text says, "and have been taught in him, as truth is in Jesus;" there is no word "the" in the original, it is "as truth is in Jesus." That is to say, we must truly know Christ as truth, and *it should be our desire to know truth even as it is in him.* Truth is in Christ fully, so we must seek to know it fully. Truth is also in Christ practically,—it is embodied in him. Truth in Christ was not a mere philosophy, not simply dry doctrine; but he lived the truth, yea, he was the truth. This is how we want to know Christ,—till truth in Christ shall be truth revealed to us, truth embodied in us, truth lived out again by us "as truth is in Jesus,"—every lie put far away from us, all guile and deceit for ever banished. As truth was in Jesus, with no fiction, and no guile, as he was pure, simple-minded, child-like, so shall we become through learning him, and being made like him; we too shall become true, transparent, candid, honest, upright, Christlike men. I wish we were all like that, dear friends; but we know too much, or think we do, we are too cunning, and look too much round about us, to be as Christ was. People laugh at us if we wear our hearts upon our sleeve for daws to peck at; and we think that we should keep ourselves to ourselves, and be careful, and cautious, and even suspicious of all we meet. Oh, but I would rather be taken in a thousand times than suspect other people! It is better to wear your heart wide open, though men laugh at its every movement, than it is to cover it up, and try to conceal what we really are. God make us like the holy child Jesus,—children of God, with Christ Jesus for our elder Brother! That is what we shall be when we have learned Christ, and have heard him, and have been taught by him as truth is in him. May it be so with all of us! God bless you, and help you to cherish and to realize this desire, for Christ's own name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ZECHARIAH XIII.

Verse 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

They shall see their pardon when they have truly seen their sin. When once the foulness of their transgression is perceived, then the fountain of cleansing shall be perceived, too. No man ever knows the preciousness of the God-given remedy till he has felt the force of the terrible disease. No one by faith plunges into the crystal fount of perfect cleansing without first lamenting the filthiness which needs to be removed.

2. *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the* LORD *of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

Where there is pardon, there is sure to be sanctification. The idols must fall, and the false prophets must go. We cannot have our sins and have a Saviour, too. If we have Christ to blot out our sin, we must have the same Christ to remove sin as to its authority, and power, and dominion over us.

3. *And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy,—*

When any false prophet shall still pretend to prophesy,—

3. *Then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the* LORD: *and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.*

So intense shall be the hatred of false prophets, that men shall not spare even their own children. They shall abhor them when they stand up against the Lord of hosts, and against his truth.

4. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:*

They shall give up this wicked employment at once and for ever. Just as when one, who has pretended to tell fortunes, is converted, and he forsakes that evil occupation; so converted men must never be in association with those who are familiar with the spirits of the dead, and who practise sorcery and the like abominations. Everything of the kind is to be abhorred by godly men, and they must turn away from it with holy horror and disgust.

5, 6. *But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?*

What are these marks of the idol gods and goddesses? Have you not been branded with them? Did you not belong to the accursed fraternity that worship idols, and receive the *stigmata* in their hands?

6. *Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

Idolatry shall become so detestable a thing that he will say anything rather than acknowledge that he has had aught to do with idols. Those very marks in which the false prophets once gloried, they shall loathe. The Brahmin shall throw away his sacred thread, and those who have been tattooed in honour of other false gods shall hate the marks of shame that are upon their persons.

Now, brethren, inasmuch as the heathen prophets received in their bodies the marks of their gods, we understand something of what Paul meant when he wrote to the Galatians, "From henceforth let no man

trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He regarded his baptism as a kind of water-mark that could not be removed; he looked upon the marks of the scourge, with which he had been beaten again and again for Christ's sake, as being proofs that he belonged to Jesus. They stamped him with the broad arrow of the great King, so that all men might know that he was dedicated to him and to his service, tattooed with marks in his flesh that were indelible, and never to be removed.

7, 8. *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the* LORD *of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the* LORD, *two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.*

So, in the times of God's fiercest judgments, he has a remnant according to the election of grace who shall escape the sword, because that sword has been awakened against him who was their Representative, their Surety, and who stood as Substitute in their place.

9. *And I will bring the third part through the fire,—*

"Saved; yet so as by fire." This is true in a certain sense of all the righteous; they shall certainly be saved, and though the fires of persecution should rage around, the Lord will bring them through the fire. They shall not perish in it, but they shall even derive good from it: "I will bring the third part through the fire,"—

9. *And will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:*

If you are God's people, you will certainly be tried and tested. As surely as ever God has put you in the third part that he will save, he has also ordained that you should pass through the fire. You shall have, both within and without, that which shall test your sincerity, and prove whether your faith is of divine origin or not. There is no easy road to heaven.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Yet we who believe in Jesus are not an unhappy people; the character of God's saints is still according to Paul's paradoxes, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

9. *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them:*

What a precious little sentence: "they *shall* call on my name"! And God will give ear to their prayer: "and I will hear them." The "shall" and the "will" are put close together, and the one is as much the work of God's grace as the other is: "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them."

9. *I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The* LORD *is my God.*

Note these quick responses,—echoes, as it were. They call, and God hears. God speaks, and they reply. God says, "It is my people." They answer, "The Lord is my God." Blessed are you if you can join in these heart-echoes, or can say, with the spouse, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Is there this mutual interchange of love between you and the all-glorious Lord? If so, thrice happy are you; but if not, God grant that you may speedily enter into this secret of the Lord! May he bless to every one of us the reading of his Word, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SAVIOUR RESTING IN HIS LOVE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 31ST, 1901.

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, early in the year 1859.

"He will rest in his love."—Zephaniah iii. 17.

ONE of our sweetest hymns commences with this verse,—

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

Well might the poet have put that question, if he had risen up from reading this third chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah. O people of God, open your ears and your hearts while Jehovah thus speaks to you by the mouth of his ancient prophet, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." The words are very simple, but the promises they convey are so weighty that the verses roll along like the triumphant periods of a jubilant poem. The truth of God, even when told in the simplest words, is very much akin to the loftiest poetry; and I might, without the slightest hesitation, declare that there never was any poem, composed by human intellect, which could match for a moment, in the sweetness of its notes, the succession of precious promises which God here proclaims in the ears of his chosen ones.

We cannot, on the present occasion, enter into the wondrous depths of the promises here revealed. We should need, indeed, a long period of time before we should be able to explain them; and, possibly, the whole of life will scarcely be sufficient for us fully to realize these great truths in our own experience. We will, therefore, at once turn to the few words I have chosen as my text, "He

will rest in his love," and we shall consider these words as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, and as relating to his divine and matchless love, which he hath manifested toward his people in the wondrous works of grace which he has accomplished for them and in them.

"He will rest in his love." This short sentence is capable of several interpretations, and each view we take of it has in it something extremely delightful.

I. Here is, first of all, THE DOCTRINE, THAT CHRIST WILL KEEP EVER FAITHFUL TO THOSE UPON WHOM HE HAS SET HIS HEART'S AFFECTION.

The love of human beings is a fitful and flickering flame; it may be set, for a season, with apparent constancy upon a certain object; but you can never tell how long it will remain steadfast. However firm, however true, and however fervent it may seem to be, and even really may be, yet trust it not so implicitly as to come under that ancient sentence, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Trust not too much to any friend whom you may have; put not all your confidence in any man, for the best of men are but men at the best, and the firmest of men are subject to the infirmities and the frailties of their race. But God's love is no flickering flame; it does not flare up for a little while, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and then die out in darkness; it is not to be set forth by the image of a fool's mirth, which lasteth but for a little season. It beginneth, it waxeth vehement, it diminisheth not, but it groweth from strength to strength, till what seemed at first to be but a single spark, becomes a mighty flame, and what was a flame becomes like the beacon-lights of war, and what was but as a beacon becomes as the sun itself, in the fierceness of its heat and in the majesty of its goings.

There are some who teach that Christ's love may be set upon a man, and yet that it may afterwards be removed from him. Where, then, remains the comfort of God's people if their teaching is true? But, thank God, it is not true; for the promise of the text is that Jesus "will rest in his love." If their doctrine is according to the Scriptures, where is the value of Christ's affection at all? In what respects can he be said to stick closer than a brother? How can it be true that many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it? If these men are right, must not the apostle Paul have been wrong when he declared that he was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in the whole of creation should ever be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord? Shall we imagine that the apostle was mistaken, and suppose that this erroneous teaching is the truth of God? Shall we turn away from the positive testimony of Holy Scripture, and believe the falsehoods of men in its place, especially when that Scripture is itself so full of consolation to God's people that, if it can ever be proved to be untrue, they may put their hands upon their loins in agony of woe, and go to their graves full of misery and despair?

But, beloved, ye know right well that Jesus Christ's love, when once it has engraved your name upon his hand and his heart, will never suffer that name to be erased. Ye believe, and ye believe aright, that he who has a portion in the heart of God has an eternal portion. He who can claim for himself a share of the Father's love, of the Son's redemption, and of the Spirit's care, need never be afraid that all the thievish hosts of hell shall rob him of his divine inheritance. For look ye here, brethren, what is there, to separate you and me from Jesus Christ's love, which has not been tried already?

Can sin ever make Jesus cease to love me? If so, he would have ceased to love me long ago. If there be any iniquity that I can commit that would divide me from Christ's love, methinks that I should have been separated from him long ere this; for, in looking back upon my own life, I am compelled, with shame and confusion of face, to fall upon my knees, and confess that he has had a thousand reasons for thrusting me out of doors if he had chosen to do so, and he might have framed millions of excuses if he had resolved to blot my name out of the book of life. He might have said, "Thou art unworthy of me, and therefore I will be unmindful of thee."

Further, if Christ had intended to cast us away because of our sins, why did he ever take us on? Did he not know, beforehand, that we should be rebellious, and did not his omniscient eye see all our sins, and detect all our follies? Are we ungrateful? He knew that we should be. Are our sins extremely heinous? He knew how heinous they would be. He could foresee all; every spot that was to be upon us, was upon us, before his omniscient eye, when he chose us; every fault that we should commit was already committed in his estimation. He foreknew and foresaw all; yet he chose us just as we were. If he had intended to abandon us, and cast us away, would he ever have accepted us at all? If Jesus meant to divorce his bride, foreknowing all her faults, would he ever have espoused her? If he determined to cast away his adopted child, since he knew that child's unfaithfulness, would he ever have adopted him? Oh, think not, beloved, that Christ would have done all that he has done for nothing, that he would have come from heaven to earth, and have even gone from the cross to the grave, and allowed his spirit to descend into the shades of Hades, on a bootless errand! Would he not have started back, and said, "I know my bride will prove to be unworthy, therefore I will not espouse her"? But since he has espoused her, and has put the red ring of his own atonement on her finger, and has hitherto been faithful to her, what shall ever constrain him to divorce her? What can ever induce him to cast from his bosom her whom he died to save? It must be true that "he will rest in his love," for he has hitherto rested in it, though he has had much to mourn over in his chosen ones.

Our sin, then, has not divided, and, we believe, never shall divide us from the Saviour's love. What remains? *Will sorrow ever separate us from our Saviour?* Can tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, separate us

from the love of Christ? Nay, for all these things do but make the Saviour manifest his love to us the more. If Christ loves his people well in prosperity, he never loves them any the less in their adversities. Do you believe that Christ loves his children when they are arrayed in purple, and that he will forsake them when they wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented? If so, ye know not the heart of Jesus. He loves his people well enough every day; but if he sees them stretched upon the rack, and about to die for his sake, if it be possible, the infinity of his love must then surpass itself. Well said the apostle, when he had mentioned all these sufferings and pains, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Sin and sorrow, therefore, are perfectly incapable of rending us from the heart of Christ, for he must, "he will rest in his love." And this truth will seem all the more plain and clear if we just pause a moment, and think of *our relationship to God the Father and to God the Son.* Is not every Christian God's child? And did you ever know a true father who hated his own child? You may have known such a father, but it was unfatherly for him to hate his own son. Have you known a father who has cursed his son, and driven him forth from his home, and declared that he was not his child? You may have known some men of that kind, or you may have heard of such unnatural creatures; but, mark you, the father's curse could not unchild his child;—he was still his father's son, even when he was cursed by him. Not even the foulest words that ever came from the most embittered heart could ever take away that child's right to call that man his father; a child is a child for ever if he is once a child, and a father is a father for aye if he is once a father.

Now, beloved, in the usual course of nature, we find that men will do anything for their children that they possibly can do. Here is a poor creature, born into the world, nearly an idiot;—it has not its senses right, it is nearly blind and deaf, and its parents know that, even if they can bring it up, it will always be a trouble to them; yet you see with what studious care the father and mother endeavour to save the poor child's life. While others say, "If it were to die, it would be a happy release," both father and mother feel that they would be losers by its death. "Ah!" said one good old divine, "if a father could have a child that had lost eyes and ears, and feet and hands, though he could not breathe in a natural fashion, though he could not feed without some extraordinary means for the digestion of his food, even then his father would do his best to keep him alive; and so surely shall it be with that great Father, who, when he speaks of himself, and of us, always puts his Fatherhood far higher than ours, as Christ did when he said, 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' And truly I may say, if an earthly father does not wish to lose his child, if he would endeavour to save his child's life though it was loaded with ten thousand diseases, how much rather shall our Father who is in heaven see to it that none of his little ones shall perish, but that every one of them shall be

preserved!" Do you not see that, because we are God's sons, we are, therefore, Jesus Christ's brothers, and "he *will* rest in his love"?

But there is yet another thought, for we have a relationship also to Christ, and therefore "he will rest in his love." We have never yet heard of a man who hated his own flesh. Strangely wicked as it is, we have heard of men who have hated their flesh in the mystic sense of the marriage tie, and who have driven their wives from them with all manner of brutality and cruelty. She whom the husband promised to cherish and to nourish, he has driven away, yet he has never thus treated his own flesh; the man may have become cruel and unnatural towards her who is his own flesh by marriage, but not towards his own literal flesh. Now, Jesus Christ has taken his people into such a connection with himself that they are nearer to him even than the wife is to the husband; they are as near to him as our own flesh and blood are to our own head. What will not a man do to save his hand, or the least member of his body? Would he ever cease to care for even the feeblest portion of his frame? No; men are generally careful enough of their own flesh and blood; much more, therefore, will our Lord Jesus Christ protect the members of his mystical body, for we are his fulness, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. And will Christ lose his own fulness? Shall his body be dismembered? Shall the head become a bleeding head, and the trunk become a corpse? Shall any one member be left to die, to burn, to be destroyed? Oh, no! As surely as we are brought into this relationship with Christ, so surely are we saved beyond any hazard. This is one meaning of the text, and most consolatory to the tried, tempest-tossed child of God.

II. I think, however, that there is another very sweet meaning to it; that is, CHRIST HAS LABOURED IN HIS LOVE, AND HE NOW RESTS IN IT.

Let me draw a picture for you. Here is a man, who loves his hearth, and his home, and his country, and his Queen. The sound of battle is heard in the land, so he girds his sword upon his thigh, and marches forth to defend all that is dear to him. He fights, he struggles, his garments are stained with blood, and he himself is wounded. It is love—love of his own safety, and of his family, and of his country, that has made him fight so bravely. And now that the deed is done, he comes back to his home. The foe has been swept from the white cliffs of Albion, and the land of liberty is still free; Britons are not slaves. The man retires to his house, and you see how quietly he sleeps, how joyously he sits down under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. With what joy does he now look upon the faces of those whom he has defended, and upon the home for which he has fought! What satisfaction does it give him to know that the honour of his country is still unstained, and his land is still the home of the free! Now he rests in his love; that which made him fight, now gives him joy; that which impelled him in the day of battle to do great deeds of heroism, is its own sweet reward. Now he rests because the battle is fought, the victory is won, and he, therefore, rejoices in the very love which once caused him to labour.

Now see the Lord Jesus Christ labouring in his love. Love fetched him from his throne in heaven; love disrobed him of his glories; love laid him in Bethlehem's manger; love led him through this weary world for three-and-thirty years; love took him to Gethsemane; love oppressed him till he sweat great drops of blood; love made him the great Standard-bearer in the fight; love made him stand erect, the focus of the war, when the storm gathered round his brow, and every arrow of the foeman found a target in his heart; love made him—

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory;"—

love made him bow his head, and give up the ghost, that he might redeem his people from their sins. Now, he is more than conqueror, he rises to heaven, and he rests in his love. Oh, what a wondrous rest that is! If rest be sweet to the labouring man, how much sweeter to the bleeding Man, the dying Man, the crucified Man, the risen Man? If rest be sweet after toil, how sweet must be the rest of Jesus after all the toils of life and death, the cross and the grave! If victory makes the soldier's return joyous, how joyous must have been the return of that conquering Hero who has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men! Truly doth our Lord Jesus "rest in his love."

Do you not see that the very thing that drove him to labour, now makes a pillow for his head? That which made him strong in the day of battle makes him joyous in the hour of victory, and that is the love which he bears to his people. For, lo! as he sits down in heaven, he thinks within himself: "I have done it, I have finished the work of my people's redemption; not one of them shall ever perish; no drop of the hail of God's vengeance can fall on them, for it has all fallen on me. I have been smitten, I have borne the curse; and, now, they cannot be cursed, they are delivered." And then his holy mind roves on in meditation: "I have taken away the curse, and I have given them the blessing; I have brought many of them to know and love me; and, in due season, I will bring all the rest; they shall come that are ready to perish, for I must have every one of my blood-bought sheep with me for ever. They shall be blessed on earth, and by-and-by I shall have them where I am, and they shall feed in these rich pastures; they shall lie down where the wolf cannot come, and where desolation cannot enter. The time shall come when I shall have their very bones resuscitated, when their flesh, that has lain in the dust, shall live again to be with me; so shall they all, every one of them, body, soul, and spirit, regain all the inheritance that they had lost, and, with all that double portion which I have gained for them, share the spoil, and wave the palm, and be more than conquerors, through what I have done for them." This thought gives sweet rest to the Saviour, who once laboured here below, and who now, in heaven, "rests in his love."

III. I find that Dr. Gill gives this as one of the meanings of the text, for he is always noted for giving a great variety of meanings to a text; and, sometimes, nobody knows which is the

true one. When he is going to explain a passage of Scripture, he says, "It does not mean this, it does not mean that, and it does not mean the other." Probably, nobody ever thought it did mean anything of the kind. After he has mentioned several things which it does not mean, he mentions some that it may mean, and then, last of all, he tells us what it actually does mean. He says our text means, "HE SHALL SOLACE HIMSELF IN HIS LOVE."

There is something very sweet in love; whether it is sweeter to be loved or to love, I know not; but, certainly, when the two experiences meet together, they are like two noble rivers which have flowed through a rich and fertile country, and then combined to make some great lake, or inland sea; then are they broad waters indeed. Now, Christ sees our love; the love which he has put into us meets the love which he has poured out towards us; and in both of these he finds a sweet solace. He solaces himself in love; this it is that cheers and comforts him. Some men, when they would be cheered on earth, drink the wine which stirs their blood; some men find comfort in company, and the noisy, thoughtless talker makes them glad; others, when they would be solaced, turn to books; these are their joys. Others, when they would be satisfied, chink their gold, look over their mortgages, their estates, their bonds, and things of that kind; and some men there are, who in this world have nothing sweeter for solace than the love of those who are near and dear to them. The man who loves his home and his family, and finds his little earthly heaven around his own hearth, is one of the happiest men I know. Treasure that thought for a moment, and think of Christ as taking delight in his family.

I never yet heard that Christ rests in his power. He has great power; see what he has done. He has built the heavens; he has stretched out the earth, and he upholds the clouds with his might: but he never rests there. I know, too, that he has great wisdom: he knows all things in the ages past, in the time present, and in the centuries yet to come. He can unravel mysteries, and foretell all things, yet I never heard that he rested in his wisdom. There is a great crowd of angelic spirits, ever waiting in his courts above, and he, as King, sits in the very centre of them all, and before him principalities and powers cast their crowns; but I never heard that he rested even in their homage. No; our Lord Jesus Christ is like the man who loves his family; he rests in the midst of his own beloved ones,—his spouse's bosom, the place where he hears his children cry, where he listens to their prayers, the door at which he receives their thanksgiving, and bestows his blessing, the house where they wait on him and he waits on them, where they commune with him, and he communes with them;—that is the place where he rests. He rests in his love, in the midst of the objects of his love; there it is that he finds his own eternal satisfaction, the solace of his heart.

Is not that a sweet thought? It has ravished my soul, while turning it over, to think that Jesus Christ should ever find his rest among the poor sons of men. Long ago, it was said of him, "His delights were with the sons of men," and now that is his rest, too.

Oh, how pleasant it is for us to know that our Lord will not sleep anywhere but in the house of his beloved, and 'neath no other tree will he recline but beneath the trees of his own right-hand planting! It is very easy for me to say of Christ, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons;" but it is surprising that he should ever say the same of me. I can say of him, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste;" but it is wonderful for him to say the same of me, or to turn to some poor saint, and say to him, "O soul! thou art weary, but thou art my rest, and I am thy rest; thou art sick, but thou art my health, and I am thy health; thou art sad, but thou art my joy, and I am thy joy; thou art poor, but thou art my treasure, and I am thy treasure; thou art nothing, and yet thou art my fulness, and I am thy fulness!" Oh, what a host of precious thoughts we can meditate upon here! We have started a whole covey of sweet things, and we might profitably stand still, and admire them. It is not merely one sweet thought, but many that are included in this one precious truth, "He will rest in his love." He never rested till he found that all his love was given to us, and he never will rest completely till all our love is given to him.

IV. The Hebrew conveys to us yet another idea. In the margin, we read, "HE WILL BE SILENT IN HIS LOVE."

Why is this? What can silence have to do with love? One old divine thinks that Christ means, by this expression, to say that his love is so vast that it can be better heard by his saying nothing than by his attempting to express it. What a great deal Christ has said, in the Scriptures, about his love; and yet hearken, O spouse of Christ, the love that he hath not spoken is ten times more than anything he has yet said! Oh, yes; there is much love which he has brought out of the treasure-house, and given to you; but he has much more like it in that divine heart of his. Some drops of his love you have already received, but those bright clouds on high, those storehouses of his grace, contain treasures of which you have never yet even dreamed. When you read one of the promises, you say, "Ah, this is indeed precious!" Yet, recollect that what our Lord has revealed in his Word is not a tenth of what he has not said. He has said many rich things, but there are richer things still. He has not said them, he cannot say them, because they are unsayable, they are unutterable, they cannot be declared; at least, not at present. When you get to heaven, you will hear them; you cannot hear them here.

You know that the apostle Paul said, when he was caught up to the third heaven, he heard words which it was not lawful for men to utter. Perhaps he then heard more of the Saviour's love, as though Christ said to him, "I tell you this, but you must not tell it to anyone else; it is not lawful to utter it down below. I have made you a great vessel, and you can hold this revelation; but as for the rest, they are only little vessels; do not tell them any more, it would burst them; do not expose them to too great a heat of love, it would consume them;—they would die if they knew more,—they cannot understand more. I have told them so much of my love

that, if they only understood all I have told them, they would not be able to live on earth, their hearts would burst for joy, and they would be obliged to flee to me above. Therefore I tell them no more, for they cannot bear it." So that, you see, there is great preciousness in this rendering, "He will be silent in his love;" as if he could not say it, therefore he would not try to say it, he would just leave it alone. One poet, after praising God with all his might, finds that he can go no further, and winds up thus,—"Come, then, expressive silence, tell his praise." That is just the meaning of the text, as if Christ would say, "I have said a great deal, but my people cannot understand; I will say no more; I shall only now say, 'Come, then, expressive silence, tell my love.'"

There is, however, a meaning that is, perhaps, even more correct. "He will be silent in his love," may mean that he will be silent about his people's faults; from the connection of the text, it looks like this. "The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more." It looks as if he meant to say he would be silent about their sins. There stands Christ in heaven to-day, pleading for his people. Listen! He says nothing to accuse them. Satan may accuse, but Christ never will. The good that his people do is magnified, and multiplied, and perfected, and then presented before the throne; but as for the sins of his people, he has cast them behind his back, and all he says concerning those sins is this, "I behold no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; my anger is turned away from them; I have blotted out like a cloud their iniquities, and like a thick cloud their sins." Sometimes, love makes a man silent. If you hear anything said against one whom you love, and you are asked, "Is it not so?" you say, "Well, I am not compelled to bear witness against one whom I love, and I will not do so." You know that our law does not demand of a wife that she shall give evidence against her husband; and, certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ will never give any evidence against his spouse: "He will be silent in his love." If he were called upon to say, "Has thy spouse sinned?" his declaration would be, "I am the Sin-offering on her behalf. I am her Substitute; I have been punished in her stead. I can say, 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.'" There will not be a word of accusation from him. She says of herself, "I am all black." He will not deny it, but he will not affirm it. He says, "There is no spot in thee;" and he goes on to say that she is all fair in his sight. O glorious silence! "He will be silent in his love." So am I inclined to believe it will be at the last great day, when the books shall be opened. Christ will read out the sins of the wicked recorded against them; but, as for the sins of his people, "he will be silent in his love." I sometimes think that it will be so, though I cannot speak with authority. "No," he will say, "upon you be the curse,—you who lived and died without washing in my blood in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; but as for these my people, they have had their sins blotted out; and I will not read what is obliterated; I will be silent in my love."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XXIV.

Verses 1—4. *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:*

Brethren, they might have been much more perplexed if they had found the body of Jesus there, for then his promises would not have been fulfilled, and all their hopes would have been blighted for ever. Unbelief is often the mother of needless perplexity. The resurrection of Christ is plain enough to us now; but to those who had seen him die, and whose faith was so very weak, it was a cause for perplexity that they could not find his dead body. They meant to embalm it, they had brought sweet spices with them for that purpose. It was well that it was in their heart, although it was an unwise and needless project. Yet I doubt not that the Lord thought those spices were very sweet, and that he accepted them because of the love they represented; and, sometimes, you and I, in our ignorance, have tried to do for Christ what he would not wish to have us do, but he has understood our motive, and accepted our intention, albeit that there was a mistake lurking behind it.

5—8. *And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words,—*

It is well to know Christ's words, even though we often forget them; because we could not remember them if we had not once known them. Even though our leaky memory lets so much run through, there will be enough remaining in the soul to come back with great sweetness, by-and-by, in some time of special need. Thus, these holy women, who had often ministered to Christ, "remembered his words,"—

9—12. *And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre;—*

He must needs go and see for himself, impetuous spirit that he was; so he "ran unto the sepulchre;"—

12. *And stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.*

Thus that notable day wore on. Christ had risen, but his people had not risen to full belief in him; they were still in the grave of distress and doubt, though their Master had left the grave of death.

13—15. *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*

Where two, whose hearts are right, and whose talk is heavenly, keep company with one another, Christ is very likely to make a third. Sometimes, when he does not come to one, he reveals himself to two; as he said

to his disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And often, when two believers agree in communion, there is a sweet magnetic force about their fellowship which brings the Saviour to them, and retains him in their company.

16. *But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.*

Oh, these eyes of ours! They let us see a great deal that we had better not see; and there are some things, which we might almost die to see, which we see not. I doubt not that, often, spiritual beings are about us, but we do not discern them; and, certainly, the Master himself ofttimes draws near, yet our eyes are holden, and we do not see him. This may even happen at the communion table; we may see the signs and symbols, but see not Christ, the signified and symbolized One. It is ill when it is so.

17—25. *And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools,—*

I feel sure that he said that word very gently;—not as you and I might say it, in a pet. Yet, truly, as we read the story, we cannot help feeling that they were very foolish and stupid. Their own tale convicts them. So no wonder Christ said unto them, "O fools,"—

25, 26. *And slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses—*

At the very Pentateuch,—

27. *And all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

We may well wish that we might have been there. What a privilege it was for those two disciples,—a walk and a talk combined! But what heavenly talk, all concerning himself! I know that you, dear friends, never relish a discourse unless Christ is foremost in it; but when Christ is the sole subject, and even Scripture itself is made subordinate to the display of Christ, then are you well content.

28. *And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went:*

And sorry, I have no doubt, they were to do so. One would like to walk on to all eternity with Christ thus talking by the way.

28—30. *And he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.*

That was the old sign, well known to them and to him,—that blessing and breaking of the bread.

31. *And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.*

It is sometimes so with us; we have just recognized our Lord, and, lo! he has gone.

32. *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us,—*

Oh, blessed heart-burn!

32, 33. *While he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour,—*

They could not stop away from their fellow-disciples; they must tell such glorious tidings as they had, so "they rose up the same hour,"—

33—36. *And returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them,—*

That is usually his way; while we are talking about manifestations of Christ in the past, he often comes again among us, and gives us a new revelation of himself.

36—41. *And saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy,—*

That is a singular combination. At first, they believed not for grief; and now the pendulum swings the other way, and they believe not for joy. There is a kind of unbelief that is begotten of excessive delight. We know something to be true, and yet there comes the recoil, and the doubt, "Surely it is too good to be true; can it really be so?" See how Jesus convinced them that he was not a spirit: "while they yet believed not for joy,"—

41. *And wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?*

"Anything to eat?"

42, 43. *And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.*

That was proof positive that he was still composed of flesh and bones, a real person, and no phantom.

44—51. *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

He went away in the act of blessing, and he has never left off blessing his people from that day to this.

52, 53. *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 7TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 6th, 1880.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—John xx. 29.

WE count those people blessed indeed who lived in our Saviour's day, and saw him when he dwelt here among men. And truly blessed were their eyes, for they saw, and their ears, for they heard, what kings and prophets had long desired to see and to hear, yet were not so privileged. But we who now believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, have a blessing superior to theirs, for the benediction of the text is not to those who saw and believed, but to those who "have not seen, and yet have believed." No doubt Thomas was highly favoured when his Lord said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side;" this was an act of very remarkable condescension on Christ's part. I can scarcely conceive that any other of the twelve apostles was more tenderly treated than was this doubting disciple. Nevertheless, though Thomas was greatly privileged, there is a superior blessing, as his Master told him; and that blessing, I hope, belongs to many of us: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

How often have you said, in your heart, "They are indeed blessed up yonder, for they behold Christ face to face; their eyes do see the King in his beauty, in the land that is very far off." Yes, beloved, they are truly blessed; none can gainsay that, for John heard the voice from heaven saying unto him, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." There is indescribable bliss for all those who behold their Saviour's face, and who wear his name in their foreheads. Yet, dear friends, think not that all blessedness is reserved for the glorified, for we have much here also. It almost seems as if Christ had commenced to preach again his Sermon on the Mount, or to add another beatitude to those he then announced: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." We must wait for the blessing of sight till the blessed by and by, in

the land of the hereafter; but, just now, it will be quite enough to fill us to the very brim with joy if we can take in the full meaning of this message of the Master.

This blessedness belongs to us who have not seen, and yet have believed;—not to all here present, if there are any who are still in unbelief. The Lord have mercy on you, dear friends, and bring you out of that state of death and deadly danger, giving you faith in him even now! Oh, that you might begin to believe in him this very hour! But I thank God that there are many of us who do believe in Jesus, and who have received life through his name; and though we have not at present seen him, yet he declares that we are truly blessed.

I. So, the first thing I shall have to say is, PARTAKERS OF THIS BLESSEDNESS, DO NOT LET US TRY TO DIMINISH IT.

We have a blessing, peculiar and singular, through not having seen, and yet having believed, so let us not try to diminish it, first, *by pining for a voice, or a vision, or a revelation*, something which is like sight, so that it could not then be so well said of us that we have not seen. Have you never had this kind of thought, when you have been living by faith alone? Perhaps you have said to yourself, "Oh, but,—but, if God would in some way reveal himself to me, so that my very senses might assist my faith; if I might be hidden away in some cleft of the rock, and might see the skirts of Jehovah's robe; or if I might hear some voice divine but whisper that I am his; then would I indeed rejoice, and never doubt again. If I might see some miracle wrought, something that I was sure was the finger of God, if I might get near enough to God to be for life impressed with what I saw,—whether it was a burning bush, or some wayfaring man whom I might entertain as an angel unawares, —or even if it were some terrible judgment, yet if I could but feel certain that God had come near to me, so that I should never doubt again, what a grand thing it would be!" Brother, do not ask for anything of the kind, do not wish to have it even if you could, for "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." You want to see, you are pining for something which is practically the same as sight. You do not feel content to swim in the pure sea of faith; but your Lord will not give you what you childishly crave. After all, it is only vanity that you are pining for, so he will deny it to you, and will say, "My child, instead of wanting to see, believe, trust, follow me in the dark, for it is better for thee not to see. Even if thou didst see and believe, yet wouldst thou have obtained only an inferior boon, for the higher blessing, the cream of blessing belongs to those who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Next, do not try to diminish the blessing, when you are in trouble, *by asking for some remarkable and special providence to open to you.* "Oh!" says someone, "I have asked for that many a time." Well, you may, if you feel led to do so; but, still, believe in God if no particular and almost miraculous providence is manifested. God's providence is always at work, and we make mistakes in putting down some things as providences, and others as not providences. You escape in a railway accident, and say that is a providence.

Yes, but it is just as much a providence that you go to town six days a week, and there is no accident. You are supplied with bread when you are out of work, and in need; that is a providence. Yes, but it is just as much a providence when you do not get out of work, and do not fall into need. I do not say that you are not to pray for providence to help you, but I do urge you not to be continually pining after those singularities of providence which are picked out of some men's biographies, of which more than is right may be made. Do not say, "I expect God to do for me some wonderful, strange thing, or else I cannot trust him." No; "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" they who, through the whole of their lives, know that the right hand of God has been leading them steadily on. Though there is nothing they could write about, and put down as a sort of semi-miracle, yet they believe that all things are working together for good for them, and will bring out divine purposes fraught with love and grace.

Again, do not diminish the blessing *by craving after ecstatic experiences.* It is a very delightful thing, you know, to have your soul made "like the chariots of Ammi-nadib," and to be carried right away with holy delights. Such sacred joys have been given to many saints;—even Paul had to write, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;"—and we do look upon some of those happy seasons with special delight, but we must not say, "I cannot trust in God, because I have no such experiences. I cannot rely upon his promises, or cling to the atoning sacrifice, because I am denied these high spiritual joys." Oh, no! trust him even if it is all dark around you; rely upon him though you cannot see a star in the night. If, like Paul, for a day and a night you have been in the deep; or if, through many days and nights, neither sun nor moon shall appear, still trust in the Lord. Though you have not even had any spiritual joy arising out of the conscious possession of divine life in your soul, still cling to him whose everlasting arm has never yet failed any clinging soul, and whose lovingkindnesses and tender mercies are just as sure in the darkest night as in the brightest day.

There is another way in which we may diminish this blessing of faith without sight; and that is, *by always demanding clear arguments to answer every objection that may be raised.* Some of us have lived long enough to have been informed, a great many times, that the gospel has suffered most serious injury through the assaults of some learned man, who has made a wonderful discovery, which it is supposed will undermine the very foundations of revealed religion. When we were boys, the great arguments against the Scriptures used to be founded upon stones dug out of the bowels of the earth. Geology had come up, and therefore Christianity was to go down! Since then, we have seen a great number of remarkable things come and go; and some dear souls, who have been very timid, have been considerably shaken and troubled. Well now, beloved friends, let us hear our Lord saying to us, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" and let us come to this point, that we know what we do know, and it is divinely fixed in our soul that it is

so; and, therefore, if an objection is raised against what we believe, we feel certain that it goes to be answered. It may not always be our duty to answer it; we may not have the special knowledge that is necessary for that task. We have a proverb which says that "fools set stools for wise men to tumble over;" and any fool could throw a stone into a well, which a very wise man could not get out again; and, nowadays, it seems to be the business of a great many learned fools to find difficulties for wise men to answer. We have something else to do beside answering them. If you try to satisfy every man who starts a new theory, you will have nothing to do but to answer objections. One says that there is no such thing as matter; but if I prick myself with a pin, and the blood flows out, I do not need any other argument to convince me. I hope that you, dear friends, have made up your minds that certain things are matters of conviction to you, and that you will not dispute about them. For instance, the presence of God the Holy Spirit in your soul must be so truly a matter of personal consciousness that, whatever argument may be urged against it, you may say, "Well, I may not be able to answer your argument, but I know that there is a reply to it. I have not seen, yet have I believed. Though I could not form a syllogism, nor argue upon the matter to your satisfaction, yet I know within myself that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; I know, too, that he is my Father, that he has begotten in me a new life, which I never had till his blessed Spirit wrought it in me; I know that he has lifted me up into a new world, and has given me to see and to know what I never even dreamed of until I came to trust in him; so let that stand for my answer." It may not satisfy an objector, but it may satisfy yourself.

Yet again, we may diminish this blessing *by being over-anxious for success in our work.* We ought to be very anxious to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ; but blessed is the man who goes on faithfully preaching the gospel, even if he does not immediately see souls converted; and who believes in the power of the gospel, even though for the moment it is not manifest to him. Blessed, too, is the Sunday-school teacher who has not yet seen one child in his class brought to the Saviour, but who still believes that there will be many, and who keeps on teaching them, and crying to God for their salvation.

Just once more, we must try not to diminish this blessing *by wanting always to have the concurrent faith of others to support our own.* There are some people who can believe while everybody else all round them believes; if cheerful friends come in, and encourage them, they feel bright and happy. That is a kind of seeing by proxy; somebody else sees, so you believe. But blessed is he who has not seen, even with other people's eyes, and yet has believed. Blessed is he who says, "I can stand alone; if there is nobody else who believes this truth, I know it is true, for I found it in the Scriptures. If everybody else will deny it, I affirm its truthfulness, and I rest in it, for I am sure about it. 'Let God be true, and every man a liar;'—not merely some men liars, but every man a

liar, if he contradicts the God of truth. Let them all go whatever way they will; I stand steadfastly for God, and my faith in him shall not be shaken." This is a blessed way of living; and I pray that you, dear friends, may not rob yourselves of this benediction of our Lord even in the slightest degree, but that you may be resolved to claim as your own the beatitude in our text.

II. Secondly, and briefly, DO NOT LET US THINK THAT THIS BLESSEDNESS IS UNATTAINABLE.

If we are, indeed, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us believe that this benediction is ours, and that it is possible for us to believe, though we do not see. For, observe, that *God deserves to be believed.* Apart from every other consideration, his own personal character is such that he ought to be believed. If, my brethren, God had spoken to us in the Scriptures, and revealed a truth which had no analogy in nature, which was not supported by the judgment of learned men, and to which our own experience seemed to be a contradiction, yet, nevertheless and notwithstanding, God must be believed. If every morsel of evidence that ever came in our way had to be placed in the opposite scale, and we had nothing but "God hath said it" to put into this one, the fact that God hath said it ought, to every loyal heart, to weigh down all the rest. Though you have not seen, surely you are never going to compare your poor eyes with God; though you have never heard, surely you are not going to set the evidence of your eyes against the declaration of God who cannot lie. For my part, I am determined that, if all my senses were to contradict God, I would deny every one of them, and sooner believe myself to be out of my right mind than believe that God could lie; and I desire to feel that, in every emotion of my spirit, every throb of my heart, every thought of my brain, and everything that is contrary to the plainly-revealed truth of God, I will count myself a fool and a madman, and I will reckon God to be wise and true. If we can exercise such faith as that,—and I am sure God well deserves it, for the infinite Creator, the ever-blessed Faithful and True, cannot be guilty of falsehood, and cannot even err;—so, if we trust him as he ought to be trusted, then shall we realize the blessedness of which our text speaks.

Further, dear friends, look along the whole line of history, *note how the saints have trusted in the Lord,* and see whether he has not been true to them. Trace the inspired record from the days of Noah to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and see what it will prove to you. Hath he said anything, and has he not done it? Hath he promised, and then has he ever failed to keep his word? Hath he threatened, and has he not carried out the threatening? Look through the biographies of all who have trusted him. Has he deceived any one of them? Has it ever been shown that it is a foolish thing to believe God? Was there ever a man who truly trusted in the unseen Jehovah, and who, by so doing, was made a fool of? Find him out, if you can,—in a Bible story or anywhere else,—the man who really believed in God, and afterwards came back saying that he had believed a fiction, or that, if God existed at all, he had broken his promise, and deluded the man who relied

upon it. No; there is no such case, and there never shall be one. The whole roll of the past confirms the faithfulness of God.

I appeal also to you who have believed in God, and ask *if your own experience has not warranted your faith.* Brethren, ever since you have known the Lord, and up till now, how has he treated you? Has he ever given you any occasion for distrusting him? Rightly looked at, has there even once occurred, in the whole of your personal or family history, anything that reasonably permitted you to suspect the truthfulness of God? O brethren, I have sometimes called myself ten thousand, thousand fools in one for ever doubting the faithfulness of my God. When I look back over my own life, it always seem as remarkable—to me, at any rate,—as anything that has ever been found in the pages of fiction. Oh, how wonderfully and how graciously has God dealt with me! What do I not owe to his faithfulness and truth? Doubt thee, my Lord? I could doubt all except thee; and doubt myself most of all. Cannot all of you, beloved, who love the Lord, say the same? Some of you have been through deep waters; you have been very sick, or very poor, or perhaps you have lost many dear relatives and friends; you have been greatly cast down in spirit; you have gone through fire and through water; well, now, how has the Lord dealt with you in all these experiences? I know that you have found his mercy to be—

"Ever faithful, ever sure."

Well, then, he deserves to be trusted although you cannot see him. You know what kind of a man he is of whom we say, "Trust him? Yes, I would trust him as far as I could see him, but no further;" but what a dishonour you would put upon your God if you could not trust him any further than that. Indeed, that is no trust at all, it is sight. Do not, therefore, begin to doubt God because you cannot see him, and because, to reason and sense, difficulties seem to intervene; but bravely trust him when you see him not, for he well deserves to be believed. The history of his whole Church proves that he is worthy to be trusted, and your own personal history proves it, too.

III. I have spoken but briefly upon that part of our subject, although much more might be said upon it; but I want to devote a little more time to one other point. DO NOT LET ANY OF US MISS THIS BLESSING THROUGH NOT SEEING THE GROUND OF IT.

It is a blessed thing to trust God when you cannot trace him, to believe when you cannot see. For, first, *this is a sure mark of a spiritual and renewed mind.* There were some who saw Christ, who nevertheless cried, "Away with him, crucify him." There were some who saw Christ, and who could not help perceiving that there was a wonderful power in him, yet they did not believe in him, and they were not saved by him. There were persons who saw Christ, and who even in some sense believed in him, yet who believed not with true saving faith. But if any of you, who have not seen him, really believe in him, this is the evidence that you are the children of God. Let me remind you of that description of the people of

God which is given by Peter, in his first Epistle, the first chapter, and the eighth and ninth verses: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." So that the people who have received the salvation of their souls are those who love the One they have never seen, and who even rejoice in him whom they do not see. You may conclude that you are truly a child of God, you may make certain of your election and of your adoption into the Lord's family, if you can truly say, "I am one of those who have not seen the Lord Jesus, and yet I have believed in him. I can say to him,—

"'I love thee, dearest Lord! and will,
Unseen, but not unknown.'"

Next, this kind of man is indeed blessed *because, believing when he has not seen is a proof that his heart is right towards God.* I do not know any better evidence that two persons are agreed with one another, than that they fully trust each other. If I have a friend in whom I so implicitly trust that I do not want any evidence, there should be no writing between him and me; he shall not need to say that what he says is true, if he only says it, then I am certain of the truth of it; that is because my friend and I are on such good terms with one another. And when you trust God in spite of all outward appearances and surrounding circumstances, it is a comfortable proof to yourself that you are on good terms with God, that you are walking in sweet fellowship with him, and it is one of the most blessed facts in your whole history. Perhaps God is chastening you just now, and your heart is very heavy; there are many things which seem to discourage you; but, still, you can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Ah! my dear friend, you are amongst the blessed of the Lord; ay, among the very choicely blessed ones, for it is clear that there is no quarrel between you and your God. You have been reconciled to him, and you are walking with him, even though you are walking in the dark. I like that saying of the old Scotchwoman though it sounds strange. When someone said to her, "Perhaps, after all, God's promises will not be true to you, and you will be lost." "Well," she answered, "if I am lost, he will lose more than I shall." It seems a strange thing for anyone to say, but the good woman meant that the Lord would lose his honour, and his character for truthfulness if he suffered one to be lost who had trusted in him. That showed that she was on good terms with God, and understood him; and all such people are greatly blessed.

Again, dear friends, those who believe Christ, whom they have not seen, are blessed *because their character and conduct in this respect are most acceptable with God.* I do not know anything which gratifies a man more than to be implicitly trusted. There are not many of us who are worthy of such confidence; but when people do absolutely trust us, we feel that they have given us all the honour that they can possibly put upon us. No flattery can ever equal that encomium which is passed upon a man when we put entire confidence in him; and our Lord delights for us just to give ourselves up

to trust in him in that fashion. I do not believe that the seraphim in heaven praise the Lord so much, in all their hallelujahs, as a poor tried child of God does when he trusts himself entirely in his Heavenly Father's hands. And it seems to me that, the darker the night is, and the heavier the burden is, and the more crushed the spirit is, if we can fully trust him then, the sweeter is the music of our resignation, the more acceptable is the homage which we pay to God. Ah! though thou dost break me up until I am small as the grains of March dust, and though thou dost blow upon me as with a hurricane that threatens to drive me away, yet shall every atom of my being trust in thee, and believe thee, O my God! If we can carry out that resolution, it will honour God, and be acceptable to him in the highest degree. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Is it not strange that the eternal God can ever be "pleased" with us? It is a wonderful thing, certainly, that we poor creatures should, by any means, be able to give pleasure to the infinitely-happy God; yet so we do when we trust him.

Again, you shall find that the man who believes without seeing is truly blessed *because that faith brings comfort to his own soul.* I desire to bear my own testimony concerning this matter. I have never been so happy, in my whole life, as when I have had nothing to trust to but God. Those times in which I have been flung into the sea, and been compelled to swim, because I could not touch the bottom anywhere, have been the most joyous times to my own heart. If I had to select the choicest hours of my life, those which I would like to have over again, they would be those times in which I may have been thought rash and imprudent, but in which I have been enabled just to believe God, and to leave everything in his hands. At such times, I have seen the iron swim, I have seen the Lord's hand working marvellously in the midst of the earth, and it has given me the utmost delight. Now, is not every Christian here able to say just that? It is not your happiest time when the barn is full, and when the vats run over the brim; for, sometimes, you have been satiated with the abundance of your earthly mercies; but your happiest time has been when there was only the last handful of meal at the bottom of that barrel, and you had to scrape it up to make a cake for the prophet, yet there was always enough to make a cake; and when the oil only dribbled out of the cruse, and you thought it must soon be dried up, yet the Lord told you it never should be exhausted, and it never was. I think it is better to have that barrel of meal, and that cruse of oil, than it would be to have the biggest vat of oil you ever saw, and the largest granaries full of corn, so long as you have this promise for your motto, "The Lord will provide." If the Lord will provide, you cannot have a better provider. He is not in the habit, as the God of providence, of doing anything stintingly. He fills the stores of the widows and orphans, and feeds them well; and when he feeds his own children, he feeds them well. Happy is that man, and blessed in his own heart is his sense of intense comfort, who can say, "I cannot see, but I do believe."

There is another reason why such a person is blessed, and that is,

that *he is having formed in him a grand character.* It is a poor character that lives only on what it sees; that is the beast's character, it is quite satisfied as long as its eye can perceive the pasture. There is no great character that can ever come to a man who has no faith. The heroes among men are all men of faith; even those who are heroes concerning common matters, the heroes of patriotism, though it may not always be faith in God that they possess, yet is it faith of some sort that braces them up, and makes them superior to the doubters all around them. No man could be a William Tell who had not firm confidence; and, certainly, no man could have been a Martin Luther who had not full and entire trust in his God. It is a wondrous education to a man to be compelled to trust his God;—to be driven right out from paddling along the shore in his little canoe, by a big rolling wave which carries him right out to sea, and there he is taught to be a mariner who can brave the tempest, and laugh at the hurricane. We should always remain children, and have to be carried in our mother's arms, in long clothes, if we had not trials and troubles. God often hides himself in order to teach us to trust him more, and so we grow to be men, God helping us.

And, lastly, let me remind you that *we are very likely coming to a time when we shall need to believe without the use of our eyes.* If our Lord Jesus Christ does not soon come, some of us shall die; and if your faith depends on your sight, what will you do when your eyes are in the grave? They are going to be there; you will not be able to carry a single particle of this wonderful telescopic, microscopic, optical arrangement of yours with you to heaven. I have seen many of my dear friends die, and I know that their eyes were still in their bodies, for I looked into them, and helped to close them. They did not take them away with them; so how do they get on now that they have no eyes? I have seen their ears left behind, and laid in their coffins; and all their senses have gone, like their seeing and hearing; and if they could not believe without their senses, what would they do in the disembodied state where they now are before the throne of God? Why, they commune with Christ without the intervention of the flesh; then, do so now, beloved. Do not always be wanting to use these poor eyeballs, these dim glasses here, for they do not see much. There are angels, in this place, flying to and fro while I am preaching. I cannot see them; it is my eyes that make me blind, for I shall see them when those eyes are gone. My Lord is also here; I know he is, for he gave his promise of old that he would be, and he is sure to keep his word. But I cannot see him; that is the fault of these poor eyes of mine. When they are gone, then shall I see him; when I get rid of the encumbrances of eyes and ears,—

> "Then shall I see, and hear, and know
> All I desired or wished below;
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy."

What should I do, if I could not draw near to God without my eyes

and ears and hands, without touch and taste, when I am so soon to live in a world where there will be no hands, or eyes, or ears, until the resurrection morning? Then we shall get our bodies back again; but, until then, if we are to be blessed at all, it must be in the way our Lord says in the text, by faith without sight. So, brethren, if you want to enjoy great blessings, if you wish to lead a happy life, and to die a triumphant death, if you would have a glorious interregnum between death and the coming of Christ, if you would see your Master's face with acceptance in the day of his appearing, ask that this blessing may be yours, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Now I close when I have just said to you who do not know whether you are converted or not, but are waiting until you have some wonderful impression, or until you hear a voice down in the garden, or until you have a striking dream or see an apparition, and so on; all that rubbish will be of no use to you. Just believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without any of those things. You are a sinner, and Jesus Christ is a Saviour; so come and trust him. Though you see him not, yet is he to be found by you if you seek him with all your heart. Therefore, wait for none of these things that I have mentioned, but come and trust him; and blessed shall you be in believing although you cannot see him. The Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XX. 19—31.

Verse 19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

He has not risen from the tomb many hours before we find him thus coming to his disciples. His love to them was too great to permit him to be long absent from them. He had said to them, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me;" so he kept his word. He stood in their midst, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." He is the Lord and Giver of peace just as much now as he was then. Oh, that he would speak peace to the hearts of all his people now! May each believing soul among you have a deep peace! May all your troublous thoughts come to an end, and every anxious mind be calmed! Peace! Blessed peace. Oh, that the Spirit of peace would breathe it upon us all! "Peace be unto you."

20. *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side.*

These were the marks to help their recognition of him. These were the memorials to excite their gratitude. These, too, were the tokens of his condescension; for a man does not show his wounds to any but to those whom he loves; "He shewed unto them his hands and his side." You cannot see that sight, brethren, but you can meditate upon it. Think how he gave those blessed hands to the nails, and that precious side to the soldier's spear; and, as you think of them, let your love flow forth unto him who suffered thus for you.

20. *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

I should think they were glad. They had been afraid of the Jews; but they forgot that fear when they saw the Lord. I suppose that, at first,

when he suddenly appeared in their midst, they were afraid of him; but now there was first a sacred calm, and then there was a ripple of holy gladness on the surface of the still waters of their souls. We cannot see him, brethren, with these eyes of ours; but by faith we can behold him, so we may have gladness even as the disciples had. We ought to be the gladdest people in all the world, because Christ is ours, and is spiritually with us as he promised that he would be.

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

"You are to go forth and to bless the world, even as I have done. My Father hath sent me; and 'even so send I you.' You are to be my delegates, to carry on my service; my commissioned officers, to go forth to conflict and to conquest in my name."

22, 23. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

This is as much as for Christ to say, "I will back up your ministry. When you preach that men are condemned for sin of which they have not repented, I will make it to be so as a matter of fact. When you declare pardon to all who trust in my precious blood, I will make it so. That truth, which you preach, shall have my seal of approval set upon it. My power shall go forth with your proclamation of the truth, so that it shall be seen that you are not proclaiming a fiction. When you preach my gospel, I will remit the sins of all who believe it; and when you pronounce sentence of condemnation on such as remain in unbelief, I will confirm your declaration!"

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*"

Very likely, loving Jesus, as he evidently did, very much, Thomas was broken-hearted when he found that his Master was dead; so, when his fellow-disciples told him that Jesus was alive again, he could not believe it, he felt that the news was too good to be true. He had fallen into a fit of despondency, and got away, as broken-hearted, depressed people often do, trying to get quite alone, when Christian company would be one of the best ways of finding comfort and solace. So, "Thomas was not with them when Jesus came."

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.*

"We have seen the Lord; there is no mistake about the matter, for we have all seen him." And thus, with loving, anxious desire, they tried to cheer him, and to make him participate in the gladness which they themselves had enjoyed. Dear friends, always look after your weak brethren. If there is a Thomas, who is depressed and sad, and who therefore shuns you, do not you shun him; but find him out, and try to tell him what you have learned by way of comfort for your own heart. Mayhap, God will use it to comfort him also.

25. *But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Thomas should not have said that, because, after all, it was not true. I do not suppose that he did put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into Christ's side, yet he did believe. We sometimes say a great deal that would have been far better left unsaid; and, especially, when our spirit is depressed, it is a token of wisdom to feel, "We are hardly in a condition of mind in which we can speak as we ought, so we had better remain silent."

26. *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them:*

That is better. His love brought him out, you see, away from himself; and it often happens that, by getting a man away from himself, we get him away from his worst enemy.

26. *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

His first salutation, after his resurrection, was such a choice one that there could not be a better, so he repeated it when he appeared the second time. Peace is so rich a blessing that even the Divine Master can say nothing sweeter to his faithful followers; so again he says to them, "Peace be unto you."

27. *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*

Our dear and condescending Master would give to his feeble, and somewhat petulant disciple, all the proofs he had himself asked to have. He shall have evidence clear as noonday if he must have it; Thomas, however, as I suppose, was wise enough not to accept the gracious offer of his Lord. Sometimes, it is wise not to take what God himself may put in our way. You remember how Balaam was allowed to go with the men sent to him by Balak, and he did so; yet it would have been much wiser of him if he had not gone. I do not think that Thomas did put his finger into the print of the nails, or thrust his hand into his Master's side. On the contrary, we read:—

28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

Leaping out of the slough of doubt, on to the rock of confidence, by a single spring, and getting further, perhaps, than others had done who had before outstripped him. He inferred the Deity of Christ from his wounds and his resurrection,—a grand chain of argument of which we have not the intervening links. His thoughtful mind made him feel that, if Christ was indeed risen,—the same Christ who had died,—it was proved, by those death-wounds, that he was both Lord and God; while his personal, appropriating faith, realizing the identity of the Saviour's person, made him say, "My Lord and my God."

29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:*

That is well.

29. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That is better.

30, 31. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

Now, dear friends, has the purpose, for which this Book was written, been answered in your case? Have you been led to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and so to believe that you "have life through his name"? If not, why not? May you have grace to answer that question, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—48, 785.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE EDUCATION OF SONS OF GOD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 14TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, June 10th, 1880.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." —Hebrews v. 8.

WERE you ever in a new trouble, one which was so strange that you felt that a similar trial had never happened to you, and, moreover, you dreamt that such a temptation had never assailed anybody else? I should not wonder if that was the thought of your troubled heart. And did you ever walk out upon that lonely desert island upon which you were wrecked, and say, "I am alone,—*alone*,—ALONE,—nobody was ever here before me"? And did you suddenly pull up short as you noticed, in the sand, the footprints of a man? I remember right well passing through that experience; and when I looked, lo! it was not merely the footprints of a man that I saw, but I thought I knew whose feet had left those imprints; they were the marks of One who had been crucified, for there was the print of the nails. So I thought to myself, "If he has been here, it is a desert island no longer. As his blessed feet once trod this wilderness-way, it blossoms now like the rose, and it becomes to my troubled spirit as a very garden of the Lord."

My object, in this discourse, will be to try to point out the footprints of Jesus in the sands of sorrow, that others of the children of God may have their hearts lifted up within them while they observe that "though he were a Son, yet he," as well as the rest of us who are in the Lord's family, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

I. I ask your attention, first of all, to that which, I doubt not, you would have observed in the text without any help from me, namely, that OUR REDEEMER'S SONSHIP DID NOT EXEMPT HIM FROM SUFFERING.

"Though he were a Son." It is put as if this might have been a case where the rod of the household could have been spared. That there should be suffering for enemies, that there should be sorrow

for rebels against God, is natural and proper; but one might have thought that he would have spared his own Son, and that, in his case, there would be no learning of obedience by the things which he suffered. But, according to the text, Sonship did not exempt the Lord Jesus Christ from suffering. I want you to notice that, *in his case, the Sonship was very emphatic.* It was a relationship which was enjoyed by him by nature. He was the Son of God or ever the worlds were made, or time began. We know not how it was, neither may we attempt to explain the doctrine of the eternal Filiation; but, assuredly, as long as there was a Father, there was a Son, and Jesus Christ has ever been "the Son of the Highest." Yet, though he were a Son, when he came and took upon himself our nature, and appeared on earth, he was not exempted from learning obedience by the things which he suffered. In person he was august; he was the Heir of all things, the King of all kings, the King's Son as well as King himself; and yet, notwithstanding the loftiness of his nature, and the unspeakable majesty of his rank, he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He was *the* Son of God in a very special sense even by his earthly birth, for the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

You and I are the children of men, but Christ was the Son of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing better; and the best of parents have only fleshly, carnal children. There is not a word of Scripture to support the novel notion that some children are born so good that they do not need regeneration or conversion. I do not wonder that, to patch up the figment of infant sprinkling, that lie should have been forged,—and it is nothing but a lie, there is not an atom of truth at the back of it. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians that they "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Men are not the children of God by any universal fatherhood; they must come to be so by being begotten again "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is not with us a matter of nature, but the gift of grace. "As many as received him, to them gave he power (the right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." But our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God by birth, and he is spotless in his nature. There is no corruption, no bias towards evil, no original sin, no taint of birth; nothing of the kind. He is the second Adam; but he has not participated in the evil of the first Adam. In him there was nothing that even the prince of this world could discover with the keenest glance of his malicious eyes; and yet, though he was, in this respect, God's Son above us all, born absolutely pure, "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

Further, *Christ was always God's well-beloved Son.* Let us never forget that he was always a Son without any fault, concerning whom the Father's testimony ever was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom

I am well pleased." We who have been made by grace the sons of God, are yet, alas! forgetful children, disobedient children, naughty children that deserve the rod; but he never transgressed his Father's command at any time. The law of God was ever in his heart, and never did he turn aside from the path of right. His walk was perfect in all respects; no fault could be found with him; and yet, though he was a perfect Son, a well-beloved Son, a Son who caused his Father no anger and no anxiety by anything that he did, he did not escape the rod. He must smart, must bleed, must die; even he must endure the utmost that human nature can endure. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without sorrow. God had one Son without any taint in his nature, but he never had a son without the smart which all nature feels. Even with the Son whose Sonship was of a far loftier kind than ours, the Son in whom was no imperfection whatsoever, it was still true that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," and we may rest assured that it will be so with us also.

Further, *Christ was a Son whom God intended to honour beyond all his other sons.* After he had tarried awhile here, and descended lower and lower till he came even to the cross and to the tomb, yet God had decreed to lift him up high above all the sons of men, and to give him a name which is above every name, and to set him on the throne at his own right hand, that before him principalities, and powers, and every living thing should bow. Yet, though he was destined to such a place of honour, in the meantime he must learn obedience by the things he had to suffer. Those many crowns, which were to adorn his brow, could not exempt that head from a crown of thorns, nay, they entailed it. That sceptre, the emblem of his universal sovereignty, could not keep his hands from the nails. Nay, those hands must bear the print of the nails before they could finally wield that sceptre. Though he lived such a life as he did, continually going about doing good, and though his life now is glorious beyond all conception, yet between those two lives he must die; and he must be able to say of himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Now, as there could be, even for Christ, no exemption from suffering, I gather that *there will be no exemption for any other child of God.* If the Lord has been pleased, in great mercy, to make us his children, to let us know that we are his children, and to give us a sweet sense of our adoption into his family, we must not therefore conclude that we shall never suffer again. Oh, no! our adoption does not take away from us the rod of the covenant. You may not say, because you are certain that the Lord loves you, that therefore he will not allow you to be tried, because that is clearly contrary to the Scriptures. He himself says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" and Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Do not go upon a wrong tack, lest, by-and-by, you have to turn back, and perhaps to pierce yourself through with many unnecessary sorrows. Do not say, "I may hope that I shall escape from

trial because, through divine grace, my character has been kept clean." Dear friend, look well to your goings, for you are in a slippery path. Pray that you may be perfect in every good work to do the Lord's will; but even if you are, do not conclude that you shall, therefore, have a life of ease. Your Master's footsteps were surer than yours are, yet the stones were sharp to his dear feet. He was purer in heart and conversation than you are, yet many arrows pierced his soul, and reproach broke his heart. God may, in his mercy, give you a long exemption from any severe affliction, but that will not be because your character is better than that of others; for it is written, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." If there are some others that he does not prune, he is sure to deal thus with the fruit-bearing branches; so, perhaps, the more pure you are in your life, and the more you are doing for the honour of his name, the more you may feel the cutting of that sharp knife which takes away that excess of wood to which we are apt to run.

> "Did I meet no trials here,
> No chastisement by the way,
> Might I not, with reason, fear
> I should prove a castaway?"

Do not imagine that any amount of prayer will have the effect of staving off all trouble, for surely never did anyone else pray like our Lord Jesus Christ did. He was a Son who held much communion with his Father.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervour of his prayer."

His agony in Gethsemane was a time of the mightiest prayer that was ever heard in heaven, yet it was followed very closely by his death upon the cross. You may abound in prayer, and in thanksgiving, and in patience, and yet, for all that, all God's waves and billows may roll over you, and you may be brought into the depths of soul-trouble.

Neither may you conclude, because you enjoy very much of the divine favour and love, that therefore you will be screened from sorrow. You have, perhaps, dear friend, been honoured in the Church of God, and there are many who love you for your works' sake; yet you may not, therefore, conclude that you will be without the rod. Nay; you may be certain that you will have it if nobody else does. You have been rendered very useful in your own family, and have seen your own children grow up in the fear of the Lord. That is a great blessing; but do not get into a fool's paradise, and suppose that God has set a hedge about you, so that the devil cannot come in to attack you. Remember that, where Satan sees the hedge, he likes to try to break it down, and the case of Job has been a type of what has happened to many others. Their children have been all round them, and God has greatly prospered them; and, therefore, for that very reason, they have been the objects of Satan's most malicious regard; and, by-and-by, they have had to

feel that the Lord trieth the righteous, and that he putteth the pure gold into the furnace, that he places the wheat on the threshing-floor, and treads out the precious grain; and that he does not leave those whom he loves to suffer by perpetual prosperity, as fine silver and gold would canker and corrupt if left to themselves.

So I leave that point with you, dear friends; the Sonship of our blessed Lord and Saviour did not screen him from suffering, therefore we cannot expect that our sonship, however clearly it may be proved, and whatever honour it may have brought to us, will screen us from sorrow and suffering.

II. My second thought is perhaps more pleasant than the former one, though indeed the first is like Samson's dead lion, full of honey to those who know how to get at it. The second lesson I learn from the text is, that CHRIST'S SUFFERING DOES NOT MAR HIS SONSHIP; for, though he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, yet he was a Son all the while. Ah! and as much a Son in his deepest sorrow as he was before the eternal throne when every angel bowed before him, and delighted to do him homage. His sufferings never affected his Sonship; he was still, always, as he must be for ever and ever, the Son of God.

First, *his poverty did not disprove his Sonship.* Our blessed Lord was here in deep poverty. He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Yet he was the Son of God for all that; and you, dear friend, may be poorly clad, and worn out by toil; you may not know where you will get shoes to cover your feet; you may be going home to a miserable, ill-furnished room; and as you look about you, you may feel as if you could say, with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;" for you seem to have nothing left you. But, beloved, if you are the child of God, your poverty does not affect that relationship. He who loves the Lord when in rags is as much the child of God as he will be when he shall put on the white raiment, and stand amongst the shining ones above. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" as much in their rags as in their robes.

Next, *Christ's temptations did not affect his Sonship.* You remember how he was tempted of the devil; I will not dwell on the other temptations he had to endure, but there were the three in the desert. Satan knows how to tempt us, and he usually begins at the most favourable moment for his evil purpose. When our Lord was a-hungered, Satan came to him, and tempted him to turn the stones into bread. Did you ever notice that, when you are hungry, Satan comes to you? He has a way of trying to strike us when we are down; the old coward that he is! He never gives us a fair opportunity of fighting with him, he takes every mean advantage that he possibly can. So, when our Lord was faint with hunger, then Satan came to him, and had the impudence to tempt him in three several ways, each of the three comprehending various forms of temptation. In the wilderness, Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet he was without sin there as well as everywhere else.

But do you think that he was not a child of God because he was tempted? I want some of you to take this thought home to yourselves. When the devil was standing there, and saying to Christ, "*If* thou be the Son of God," was there really any doubt about his Sonship? No; the answers which Jesus was giving to the tempter were amongst the strongest proofs that he was indeed the Son of God; for no one else could have answered the fiend as he answered him. Now, dear friend, don't you ever say, "Because I am so much tempted, I cannot be a child of God." Why! a child of God may be tempted to self-murder, for Satan said to our Lord, when he had set him on a pinnacle of the temple, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." A child of God may be tempted even to worship the devil, for Jesus Christ was the Son of God when Satan said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Yet all those temptations were in vain; for there was in his heart no tinder which the Satanic sparks could ignite. He was still the Son of God; so thou, poor tempest-tossed, devil-driven heir of heaven, needest not be dismayed, for the tempter's malice cannot destroy thy sonship any more than it destroyed thy Lord's.

Next, *Christ's endurance of slander did not jeopardize his Sonship.* Our Lord, in addition to being poor and tempted, was shamefully slandered. They said—only think of it,—they said that he was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Yet this slander never made him cease to be the Son of God; all the venom that they spat from their black mouths could not affect his Sonship in the least. They went so far as to say, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils," as if he were in league with the arch-fiend. Oh, how could their foul hearts conceive such a thing? How dared their false lips utter such a calumny? It did not, however, hurt him; he was just as much the Son of God as ever. Though they mocked him even in his dying agonies, yet their jests and jeers did not tear him from his Father's heart, nor lead him to question his Sonship. And I want you, who, perhaps, have been slandered cruelly, and have had all manner of evil spoken against you falsely for Christ's name's sake, to feel that, notwithstanding all that may be said, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and he can see their beauties through the mud with which the world bespatters them, and, in due time, he will clear their character of all that is now laid to their charge. Our Lord Jesus does not think any the worse of his people because of what is said against them; but he says to them, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Further, *the desertion of all Christ's friends did not invalidate his Sonship.* Our blessed Master found the man who had eaten bread with him lifting up his heel against him. Judas betrayed him, Peter denied that he knew him, John and all the rest of the apostles forsook him and fled. If we have to endure such painful

experiences, we are very apt at such times to begin to say, "Have all these good men turned against me,—those who used to pray with me, who walked to the house of God with me,—do they all give me the cold shoulder, and all believe ill reports against me? Surely, then, I cannot be a child of God." Ah, my dear friend! you may be none the less dear to the heart of God, none the less accepted in the Beloved, though all this should come upon you. It is a very bitter thing to have to bear if you have walked in uprightness, and kept your footsteps from the way of the destroyer; but your Master had to bear it before you, and his Sonship was not affected by it, nor will yours be.

Even the felon's death on the cross cast no doubt upon Christ's Sonship. Crucifixion was the most shameful and disgraceful mode of execution then practised, yet he was the Son of God even upon the cross. Did not the centurion, who was on duty there, say of him, "Truly this was the Son of God"? And you and I know that he was never more seen to be the Son of God than when he surrendered himself to his Father's will that he might bear our sins in his own body on the tree, being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Well, now, if it should ever come to pass that a child of God should die under reproach, if wicked men should put him to a death of shame, and his name should be cast out as evil, that will not mar his sonship in the least. No; methinks that God never had any children that were more precious in his sight than those who died at the stake or the block for him. How fair their faces must have looked to him when they were scorched with the flames! Such love as theirs, which led them cheerfully to burn to death,—and none of us can imagine what the pain of that form of martyrdom must have been;—the love which enabled them to rejoice in God, even then, must have been most acceptable to their Lord.

Do not let us think, then, that any degree of poverty, or pain, or temptation, or slander, or shame, or even death itself, can affect the sonship of one who is really a child of God. Let us lay hold of this sweet reflection, and never let it go. Thus we have seen that Christ's Sonship did not exempt him from suffering, but that his suffering did not mar his Sonship.

III. So I follow with my third observation, which is, that OBEDIENCE IS A THING WHICH HAS TO BE LEARNED EVEN BY SONS. Though Jesus was a Son, yet he learned obedience. As God, our Saviour knew everything. As God, however, he did not obey. It was in his complex character as our Mediator that he learned to obey.

Perhaps some of you are asking, "But why cannot we obey without learning obedience?" The reason is, first, *because obedience has to be learned experimentally.* If a man is to learn a trade thoroughly, he must be apprenticed to it. A soldier, sitting at home, and reading books, will not learn the deadly art of war. He must go to the barracks, and the camp, and the field of battle if he is to win victories, and become a veteran. The dry land sailor, who never went even in a boat, would not know much about navigation,

study hard as he might; he must go to sea to be a sailor. So, obedience is a trade to which a man must be apprenticed until he has learned it, for it is not to be known in any other way. Even our blessed Lord could not have fully learned obedience by the observation in others of such an obedience as he had personally to render, for there was no one from whom he could thus learn.

"Why!" says somebody, "he might have learned obedience from the angels, who do God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word." Ah, but angels had never suffered! They have not bodies like ours, full of infirmities; and that kind of passive obedience, which our Saviour had mainly to render, is not required of them. Angels could not be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" so that our Lord Jesus could not see in them such an obedience as he had covenanted to render on behalf of his people, when he engaged to stand in their stead, and to keep the law which they could not keep. He could not learn obedience by observation; he must learn it by experience. What was to be done, what was to be suffered, he must learn by doing it, and suffering it.

It was in the doing of it that he became actually, personally, experimentally acquainted with what was meant by perfect obedience to the will of God; and he did it, brethren. He went right through with that lesson until he had learned obedience. He was getting near to the end of his great task when he said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt;" but he had fully learned it when he said, "It is finished." He had come to the last line of his lesson; he knew it thoroughly, he had learned obedience. He had to learn obedience in order that he might save us, for it was God's "righteous Servant" who was to "justify many."

Why have you and I, dear friends, to learn obedience? *Because there is no way of obtaining true happiness but by obedience.* Sin always has sorrow at the tail of it. Happiness is obedience, and obedience is happiness. If we do the will of the Lord thoroughly, then are we delivered from all evil, and enter into the joy of our Lord. We have also to learn obedience because there could be no heaven without it. We hope to go on obeying our Lord for ever and ever. Up yonder, in the heaven of glorified spirits, there is perfect obedience to the will of God; and you and I expect to go there, so we want to learn the music here until we know it, and can join the choirs above without creating discord. We are going through our practice and rehearsals now. It takes a great deal of time and patience to teach even some Christian people obedience, for so many of them like to be masters rather than servants. There are some bodies of professing Christians who give no heed to Paul's injunction, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Church discipline, and the duties of the pastoral office, they ignore, though they are clearly enjoined in the New Testament. They all like to be masters, and everybody must have his say; but as to submission to authority, they will not hear of it. There are some people who would be excellent Christians if Christianity consisted in having their own way, and gaining honour for them-

selves; but as to making themselves the servants of others for Christ's sake, or watching over others for their good, and being content to be made of no reputation in order that other people might be uplifted, they do not go in for that sort of thing. Clearly, they have not learned obedience. I fear that we have none of us learnt it as we ought; we are too masterful, too big, too proud. We cannot say, with David, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Many of us are more like a weaning child, crying, fretting, rebelling. We have not laid all our wishes at Jesus' feet, and said to him, "Not my will, but thine be done." But it is essential that we should come to this point; we should not be fit for heaven if we did not, for all the spirits before the throne bow submissively to the will of God. They have neither wish nor desire apart from God's will; they have no wandering ambitions, no selfish aims; their every thought is brought into captivity to the will of God. Let us pray for this: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; and let it be done in our hearts, good Lord, or else we shall never be fit to enter there."

IV. My last observation upon the text is this: THE OBEDIENCE WE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING OF IS NOT TO BE LEARNED EXCEPT BY SUFFERING. Though Christ was the Son of God, yet even he learned obedience through suffering. Not even through his silent studies by night, nor his active engagements by day, did he learn it; suffering had to be superadded to all this before he could become proficient in obedience. What was the reason for this?

I suppose it must be *because suffering touches a man's own self.* Satan thought so, for when God said of Job that he was a perfect and an upright man, Satan answered, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Satan was mistaken in the result, but he was wise in his suggestion that personal losses do come home to us; and the arch-enemy knew what he was at when he said to God, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." He knew what is the weak point in most men. There are some who can obey God actively; it is their delight to be almost day and night engaged in his service; but when their bone and flesh are touched, their patience is sorely tried, and it is a hard lesson for them to learn to obey God's will. Have we all, beloved, learned obedience yet? Have we not been trying to pick and choose our own way? It is not the cry of obedience to say, "Lord, give me health and strength, and I will be thy servant." But can you truly say, "Give me weakness and ill-health, and I will still be thy servant"? Have you not said, "Lord, let me run on thy errands; uphill and downhill, I will be thy servant"? And will you not as readily say, "If thou dost break all my bones, and lay me for half a century upon a bed of pain, I will still be thy servant; anywhere, everywhere, I make no reserve; I am but flesh and blood, yet do as thou wilt with me though it may mean great suffering"?

I think obedience is never fully learned until, in suffering, *our graces are put into the fire, and tested.* Neither love, nor faith, can very well be tried to the full until there is a bitter medicine to drink. Then we take it in love, and believe that it will work for our good; and thus we prove that our love and our faith are genuine. Suffering goes to the very root of our religion. Some people think they have a great deal of love, and joy, and spiritual-mindedness, and they look down on some of God's poor tried saints. Yes, yes; but you get where they are, and see whether you will not then look up to them, and wish you were half as good as they are. I have heard brethren talk about their own perfections, and of the tried child of God who has a hard struggle between flesh and spirit; and they have reminded me of that passage in the Book of Ezekiel where we are told that the fat cattle pushed with horns and shoulders, and hurt the weak cattle, and God said that he would judge them for this. I am glad if you, dear friend, enjoy unbroken peace. You have, however, a strong constitution, and you owe a good deal more of the sanctity you talk of to health and to prosperity in business than you imagine. Peradventure, if you were as sick, as tried, and as poor as some of your fellow-Christians, you would not find that you had any more grace than they have, peradventure you might have even less. A man, who has never been on board ship, says, "I am a splendid sailor." I have heard such boasting often; but I have seen that same gentleman, when we had started only a quarter of an hour, and he has learned that there is not so much of the sailor in him as he thought. In a similar manner, some people are fine Christians until they are tried and proved. They never have any doubt or fear whatever; but put them in the circumstances of others of God's children, and they are the very first to show signs of weakness. Peter said to his Lord, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Bravo, Peter; but wait till you hear that cock crow! What a change between Peter weeping bitterly outside the door, and Peter bragging a little while ago! Which Peter do you prefer? I like the one with the tears in his eyes better by far than the other; there is more tender, genuine truth about him. Trials blow away the chaff and the froth. They let a man know how much of the metal is tin, and how much is gold. They reveal what is the work of God, and what is mere nature. They make a man see whether he really is all that he thinks he is. And, consequently, we shall never come to a perfect obedience until we have passed through suffering, for so only is it to be learned.

Peradventure, *the last moments before our death will teach us something concerning obedience which is not to be learned in the rest of life.* I know not, but it may be that those last hours before the spirit shall be severed from the body, will teach us, once for all, what is the casting of the soul on God in all its fulness, and the entering of the soul into communion with God in all its blessedness. At any rate, whatever it costs us to learn obedience, it will never cost us so much as it cost our Lord: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Go, then, brothers

and sisters, back to your school still to learn until, like your Master, you can say, "It is finished;" and bless God for every suffering that comes to you, for it will be part of your preparation for the felicities of eternity. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—750, 748.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN VII. 1—13; AND HEBREWS V.

John vii. Verses 1—5. *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

It is a very painful truth, that those who were the near relations of the Saviour were not believers in his divine mission;—at any rate, at first. He was truly a prophet who was without honour in his own country, and among his own kindred; and, on this occasion, they half taunted him concerning his claims. In effect, they said to him, "If indeed you are a prophet, get out into the world, and prove it. We hear that you profess to work miracles, then, why do you hide yourself away in this country place down here in Galilee? Begone to Jerusalem, and perform your wonders before the crowds in the capital;"—half hoping, perhaps, that his claims might prove to be true, yet not, at that time, at any rate, being themselves willing to become his disciples. See how perverse is the human heart. These men might even live in close companionship with Christ, and even be nearly related to him after the flesh, and yet not be converted to him. So the best of men need not wonder if they have unconverted relations, and we may not feel certain that there is any fault to be found in their example if others are not converted by it; for, certainly, there was no fault in the example of Christ, yet "neither did his brethren believe in him."

Mark, also, that no earthly relationship is of any avail in the kingdom of heaven: "for neither did his brethren believe in him." So that, although I may be the child of godly parents, and one born of a long line of saints, yet I am, because of that, no nearer to the kingdom unless I become myself a believer in Christ. Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost; you have often heard that passage of Scripture half-quoted, let me quote the whole of it to you: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children." If you stop there, you do not get the true sense of it. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Therefore, that text teaches that there is no distinction between the children of believers and any other children. We must be called by the grace of God like the far-off ones, or else we shall not inherit eternal life.

6—8. *Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ did everything, as it were, by the clock. His life was an orderly one; it was all arranged in the eternal purpose of God.

The very day in which he should go up to Jerusalem was marked down, and he took care that he did not go before the right time. Now, half the power of a Christian life depends upon its being timely. The bringing forth of fruit in due season is one of the marks of the tree planted by the rivers of water; and one of the signs of the Son of man, who delighted in the law of the Lord, was that he said, "My time is not yet full come." When it did come, then he went.

9, 10. *When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

Not with the great caravan that travelled, sometimes, with tens of thousands of people together going up to the feast, but with his own disciples in a quieter way.

11—13. *Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

There was a general fear of violence that would come upon any who professed themselves to be his followers.

Now turn to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, the fifth chapter.

Hebrews v. Verses 1—5. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.*

What a comfort this is to us, that we have a High Priest, through whom we can come to God, who is full of compassion toward us, and who, though he had no sinful infirmity about him, was subject to the infirmities to which flesh is heir!

6—9. *As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect,*

That is, in his official character.

9—14. *He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH EGYPT AND ISRAEL.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 21ST, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 27th, 1880.

"And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."—Psalm lxxviii. 51, 52.

THERE is a very sharp line of division here between the Egyptians and the Lord's own people, and that line of division always has existed, and always will, for all attempts to blend the seed of the serpent with the seed of the woman must fail. Between the church and the world, however debased the church may become, and however reformed the world may be, there will still be a clear distinction even until the end, and that distinction will be seen in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when "before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

At the present moment, in this congregation, though no human eye can read all our characters, there is a clear division amongst us who are here. If some infallible "teller" could now divide the house into Ayes and Noes, separating those who are on God's side from those who are not, the spectacle would be a very striking one. I pray that each one's own conscience may, at least in some measure, make that division, and that we may all think within ourselves whether we fear the God of Israel or do not fear him, whether we are for him or against him; for rest you well assured that, as God dealt with Egypt of old, so will he deal with all his adversaries; and as he dealt with Israel of old, so will he deal with all his own people. The "parable" (for that is the expression with which the Psalm begins,) will be written out again in history, and be repeated, enlarged, and intensified throughout eternity. God hath made an everlasting distinction between those who fear him and those who fear him not, and that distinction will be seen in his dealings with the children of men.

I want you, first, to spend a few minutes in solemnly and sadly thinking of *the punishment of Egypt*, and then we will more joyfully meditate upon *the salvation of Israel.*

I. First, let us think of THE PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT.

Egypt, through its kings, had become the determined adversary of God. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" was the challenge flung down by Pharaoh in defiance; and the Lord, who is a man of war, was not slow to accept it. Then came that great conflict between the stony-hearted king and Jehovah the God of Israel. To all but the eye of faith, it did seem a very hopeless thing to expect that Israel should ever come forth out of Egypt. They had been so long oppressed and down-trodden that they were really only a vast herd of slaves, they had not the spirit of free men; and when Moses was sent by God to lead them out of the house of bondage, they were rather a hindrance to their deliverer than a help to him. They were a poor race of serfs crushed beneath Pharaoh's iron heel; yet Jehovah was their God, and they were his people. They might be grimy with their labours at the brick kiln, they might sweat in the iron furnace; but God was on their side, and he owned them as his people. Notwithstanding their degradation and their sorrow, he heard their cry, and he came down to deliver them; and then it became a battle royal between Jehovah of hosts and proud Pharaoh of Egypt. God determined to strike blow after blow, to deal more gently with the tyrant at the first than he did at the last, and to end the battle by letting all men see that potsherds cannot strive successfully against a rod of iron, and that puny man, at his strongest, is as nothing before the might of his Maker. God caused all the firstborn of Egypt to die on one night, and so delivered his people with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Let us learn from this that, when God comes to try conclusions between himself and his enemies, he may allow a certain time to elapse before he overthrows them, he may for a while smite gently, and so give opportunities for repentance; but if they be not accepted, we may depend upon it that God is not playing with sinners. They may fancy that he is, and they may delight to listen to those dulcet voices, those velvet-lined mouths that preach, nowadays, soft things to sinners who stand out in enmity against God; but they will find that they have been deceived when God comes to close quarters with them, and they will curse the man who has deceived them, and made them continue to resist the Most High to their eternal ruin; for, when he once layeth hold of the sword and buckler, his own words are, "I will ease me of mine adversaries;" and we may rest assured that, when he comes forth to execute judgment, he will do it as thoroughly as he did when he "smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham." I can imagine Pharaoh dreaming that he had defeated Jehovah; possibly he said to his courtiers, "I have not seen that man Moses for the last four days; certainly, he has plagued this country enough, but he has played his last card now; we shall never hear of him any more. I have stood out, and I have

won the day; let us have a great feast unto our gods; for, after all, we have triumphed." They spread the tables, and they brought out the goblets, and the impious king drank on till far into the night. But what was that cry that made him start? What are those thousands of cries all through the palace and all around it? Pharaoh's eldest son has fallen dead in a moment. He had had him crowned a little while before, and associated him with himself in the government of the kingdom; but there he lies, smitten dead in his father's presence, and before all the nobles of the land. All in the court who were firstborn sons perished there in the king's sight; and when he went out into the open air, that he might cool his fevered brow, he heard those awful cries from all the houses of the Egyptians, for there was not a house in the land in which there was not one dead. What thinkest thou now, proud king? Canst thou stand against this unseen power? God hath smitten thee now even to the heart, and broken thy proud spirit in pieces.

We may all rest assured that God has ways of punishing us if we continue in rebellion against him. We may live a long life, and never think of him; we may live a blasphemous life, and defy him; and he may for a time afflict us as he plagued Pharaoh with the flies and the locusts, and the milder judgments; but he will deal with our souls in sterner fashion in the next world when he comes to mete out vengeance without mercy, because his grace was utterly despised by us. David said, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee;" so he will; and he will know how to smite us in the most tender place if we still continue to resist him.

In the case of Pharaoh, it was his own chickens that came home to roost; *his sins brought their own punishment.* He had slain many of the children of Israel, and God had, in effect, said to him, "Israel is my firstborn; let my people go;" and as he would not let God's firstborn go, God's stroke of judgment came upon his firstborn. This is, perhaps, the most dreadful truth about future retribution that a man will see his own sin in his suffering just as he sees his face in a glass. Hell is sin fully developed,—a man's own soul permitted to go to extreme limits with that which it now carries out in a mitigated form, and so, becoming like a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, tormenting itself beyond all power of imagination. I do not know anything more awful to one's own self than to know that one has done wrong. When conscience is aroused, then you can go to Jesus, and be washed from the stains of guilt; and how sweet is that sense of perfect cleansing! But that conscience will still remain to accuse those for whom there will be no washing; that sense of sin will still be present, only a hundred times more vividly; but there will be no bath that can take away the sin. We shall continue to feel the guilt of our transgressions, but we shall not be able to find the sugar on the pill which tempted us when we were here, and we shall have to let it lie like a burning fire within our spirit, for ever seeing our own sin, the sin of our whole life, all that we did, and said, and thought, coming home to us, just as Pharaoh's evil conduct came home to him.

I do not like speaking upon these terrible themes, and I would not mention them if they were not true, and if men could be roused to escape from sin by more tender topics; but their ears are dull of hearing, so they need the trumpet to sound an alarm; and the watchman is bound to give warning in the time of danger, for it is written, "If the watchman sée the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

Remember also, dear friends, that *there was no escape from that judgment of God upon Egypt.* The Israelites were sheltered under the sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb, and not one of them was harmed; but Egypt's lintels and doorposts had no sprinkling of the blood upon the bunch of hyssop, and therefore not one firstborn son in their houses escaped.

Nor was there *any possibility of recovery from that blow.* They could not restore to life one of those who fell by the mysterious stroke of the avenging angel who flew so swiftly through the land; and when God deals with men in judgment, none of them shall be able to escape. If they could go to the top of Carmel, he would find them out there. If they should plunge into the depths of the sea, even there would he give commandment to the crooked serpent, and they should be punished for their sin. If they should borrow the wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, his warrant officers would be there first, waiting to arrest the fugitives. There is no escape from God's judgment, and no recovery from his blows. Let God kill the firstborn in Egypt, and they are killed; let God condemn the ungodly, and they are condemned; let God curse them, and they are indeed cursed. What the curse of God must mean, may you and I, my dear hearers, never know!

I want to turn away from this sad part of my subject; but before I do so, I must ask each one of you this question,—Are you an enemy of the God of Israel? If so, you can see, in the punishment of Egypt, how he will deal with you. You cannot be victorious in this fight, so yield at once. Possibly you say, "No, I am not an enemy of God, yet I never think of him." But he made you, he breathed into you the breath of life; and yet you say that you never think of him! What a shameful slight you thus put upon his person, his majesty! He is here just close to you at this moment, he surrounds your every step with mercy, and yet you never think of him! Shall I give you one of his own messages to remember? It is a very dreadful one: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." May none of you ever come to know what that terrible verse means! I am glad that it is not the duty of the preacher to look into the future, and to see even one of you perishing in sin; I could not bear to turn my eyes that way, nor even to think of it as possible. Escape, I pray you, while you can escape; flee from the wrath to come; lay hold on eternal life. The door of God's mercy is open at present, and whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ passes in through that door; in fact, he is the door, as he said, "I am the

door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Oh, that you may come unto God by him, and that there may be peace between you and God henceforth and for ever!

II. Now I will leave that sorrowful part of my theme, for I want to speak about God's own people while we think of THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL. The second verse of our text runs thus: "He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."

I might say a great deal about how they came to be his people,—by his eternal choice and sovereign grace,—but I am not going into the doctrinal side of the subject so much as the practical. Let me say, then, that *God has his people to this day*,—he has a people, in this world now, who are as distinctly his as the Jews were, and who are even more separated from the rest of mankind than the children of Israel were from the heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. The all-important question for each one of you is,—Do you belong to the Lord's people? I will tell you what is their distinguishing mark; they are those who have faith. Abraham is the father of the faithful. He believed God, and all those who rely upon God as Abraham did are Abraham's spiritual seed, and the Lord is their God. He chose them, but they have also chosen him. They can truly say, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Now, can we who are here say that we do believe in the invisible God, and that we are trying to worship him in that simple way which he prefers? We do not invent gaudy ceremonies, nor anything that springeth of will-worship; but we remember that our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." This is the special and distinctive mark of the child of God; that, whereas another man takes into his calculation only as much as he can see, or hear, or touch, this man bases his chief calculation upon God whom he cannot see, and whose voice he never heard with his ears, and he lives as seeing him who is invisible, trusting in him whom, not having seen, he loves. I ask you, dear friends, is that your character? Have you been brought to trust in Jesus Christ's blood for the pardon and cleansing of all your sin, and now is your life a life of faith upon the Son of God? "The just shall live by faith;" and that faith is the mark of God's people in the world; they have faith in him while others have not.

Many men believe in themselves; they boast of being self-made men. It is as well that they did make themselves in that sense, for they are no credit to anybody else. Some people have placed their reliance upon others; in their exercise of faith they go no further than friends whom they can see. Their friends, inasmuch as they rely upon them, and not upon God, practically become their gods. Whatever a man depends upon, whatever rules his mind, whatever governs his affections, whatever is the chief object of his delight, is his god. So we can all judge whether Jehovah is our God, or not. Do we realize his presence and power? Do we know that there is such a God? Do we love him? Do we delight our-

selves in him? Can we truly say that the greatest joy we ever have is that there is such a God, and that he is ours, and we are his? The ungodly man, who thereby proves that he is a fool, says in his heart, "There is no God." He wishes there were none; but to the child of God, it would be the greatest loss that he could sustain if he were to lose his God. He delights himself in God. God is his exceeding joy; he is, indeed, his all. This is the mark of the people of God, and God has such a people scattered up and down in all churches, and throughout the entire world, and those are the people with whom he will deal as he dealt with Israel of old: "He made his own people to go forth like sheep."

That leads us to our second point, which is, that *God brings these people out from among all others.* He brought Israel up out of Egypt; and if you are one of his people, he will fetch you out of the world. You may live for years in the world, as the Israelites lived in Goshen, and you may say to yourself, "I do not want a better heritage than this;" but if you are one of the Lord's own, he will turn that Goshen of yours into a place of bondage, until you sigh, and cry, and long to be delivered from it. God did not drive his people out of Egypt, but he led them; they came willingly and gladly, for Egypt had become a place of misery to them. So does the world become, with all its sinful pleasures; its fine glories turn to emptiness and vanity to the true child of God, and God fetches him out of it all. I have been astonished, sometimes, at the way in which God does fetch out his people. Some of them get as far into the enemy's country as ever they can, but he brings them out. Some have gone into drunkenness, others into blasphemy, some even into what they call Free Thought,—which is a state of sad bondage to the soul,—and they have thought that there they should never be reached by God's mercy, yet he has tracked them out, brought them back to himself with weeping and supplication, and made them loathe the place and the company that they once loved. When that prodigal son went away from home, with his purse full of gold and silver, it did not look as though he would ever go back to his father. See him there, in the far country, wasting his substance with riotous living. What vile company he frequented! There was nothing filthy but he delighted in it; and so it came to pass that, in process of time, a citizen of that country sent him into his fields to feed swine. The prodigal had neither swine nor fields of his own; he had been living at such a rate that he had spent all that he had. Yet he did come back to his home, for he was his father's own child; he was obliged to go back or to starve. It is a good thing for prodigals to be brought to extremities. Some time ago, I met with a young man, the son of a very godly father, and I was grieved to hear him ridicule religion, and ridicule it very bitterly, too. In the course of conversation, he said that he was keeping racehorses, and I said to him, "Keep as many as ever you can, for there is no hope of your ever coming back to God till you have spent all that you have, so spend it as fast as you can. Get down to the swine-trough, and when you are ready to fill your belly with the husks, I daresay you will want to come

back." He said that I was very sarcastic, but I told him that I was in solemn earnest, and that I thought that was the usual way in which profligates went. When they have spent all, there arises a mighty famine in the land; and when they begin to be in want, they come back. But why should any of you need God to use such rough methods of fetching you back to him? Go home at once, poor wandering child, to the great God who waits to welcome you. Oh, that his Spirit may constrain you even now!

So we see that God still has a people in the world, and that he will fetch out those people of his from the rest of mankind. With a high hand, and an outstretched arm, will he bring them out, even as he brought Israel out of Egypt.

Notice, next, that the Lord not only brings his people away from others, but *he brings them to himself:* "He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock," he himself going before them through the desert way like a shepherd. Oh, that God would, this very hour, bring out of the world and unto himself some of those whom he has chosen, for that is the soul's true place, following God as the sheep follow the shepherd. Where can any soul be so much at home as with the God who made it? Where is a son ever so completely in his right place as when he is at his father's table? Where can my poor heart ever hope to find rest but on the bosom of my God? Oh, that the Lord would, in his infinite mercy, bring any wanderers who are here to himself! The way to God must always be through Jesus Christ; he himself said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." O poor wandering souls, come to God through Jesus Christ his Son, follow where he leads, and walk ever in his way!

Further, in bringing sinners to himself, *God will also bring them to one another.* "He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He does not say that they should be like a solitary dog that comes at his master's whistle, but like a flock of sheep that move together in one direction. One mark of the children of God is that they love one another, and that they associate with each other. Why have we been guided to form churches, and other Christian communities? It is because we are gregarious creatures, and need mutual sympathy and companionship. Christ's sheep are not like ravening wolves that hunt in pairs, or singly, but they delight in company. There are some professing Christians who seem as if they could get on best by themselves, but I think that the most of us are never so happy as when we are enjoying fellowship with those who love the same Saviour whom we love. We say, concerning the place where we meet with the saints,—

> "There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
> There God my Saviour reigns."

There is no society for you young people who have been lately converted like the Church of Jesus Christ. So seek admission into it, join with the rest of your brothers and sisters in Christ, and make your home with them. I think that you hardly give evidence of

being God's child if you go in and out of his house, and never speak to anybody there, and never own anyone as a brother or sister in the Lord. Where the Father is love, and the Spirit is love, and the elder Brother is love, love should rule in all the household. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is one of the marks of God's people that they love each other; he leads them forth like a flock of sheep, he brings them into union with one another: gives them happy fellowship in his Church, and so guides them to heaven.

That is our last point; the Lord brings his people out from the world, and brings them to himself, and to fellowship with one another, and then *he guides them to a place of rest*, even as he led Israel into Canaan. The Lord is gently leading all believers onward towards their blessed resting-place above. You are not going down into Egypt, brother, like poor old Jacob went with the waggons in the olden time; you are going up to Canaan. You shall be fed all through the desert; the manna shall fall all round your tent every morning; the water from the smitten rock shall flow close to you through all your wanderings; and your Lord himself hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Your hair is whitening, you lean heavily upon your staff, you have not many more years of pilgrimage left; but to the end of your wilderness journey, your foot shall not swell, neither shall your garments wax old upon you, still shall your shoes be iron and brass, and as your days so shall your strength be. Jehovah never yet forsook any soul that trusted him. Some of us can bear witness to his faithfulness—not for so many years as others of you have seen,—but some of us can talk of thirty years' experience of a faithful God; and though we have forgotten him, and grieved him, he has never once broken any promise that he has made. Oh, the deliverances we have had, the merciful interpositions of his gracious hand on our behalf! He is a good God, a blessed God; his praises we can never fully sing. The service of God is felicity below as it is eternal bliss above. If I knew that I should die like a dog, if it could be proved to me that my faith would all turn out to be a delusion, I should like, somehow, never to be free from the delusion. It is so blessed a thing to serve God, even in this life, he gives us such joy and peace that, though many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet his service is perfect freedom, and to honour him is our supreme delight. Blessed be his holy name!

Then cometh the end, the passage of the river Jordan, and the entrance into the promised inheritance. Perhaps you are asking, "How shall I ever cross that river to enter into the portion that God has marked out for me by line and lot?" Do not be afraid; many timorous saints go over that long-dreaded stream dryshod, they never know that they are dying. How many fall asleep on earth, and open their eyes in heaven! I can fancy them almost thinking, "Am I really in eternity?" Yet the soul will never need to ask that question when once it has entered the pearly gates.

"O blissful hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near, and like my God."

An ethereal joy, such as I never knew to the full before, shall fill my spirit when once I am absent from the body, present with the Lord. Do not be afraid to die, beloved, but rather look at death as an experience to be desired. I have not the slightest wish to escape it. Those who live till Christ comes, and do not die, will have no preference over them that fall asleep in him; indeed, they will lose the fellowship with him, in his death and burial, that others will have. I like that verse which I have often quoted,—

> "Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
> But gladly put off these garments of clay;
> To die in the Lord, is a covenant blessing,
> Since Jesus to glory thro' death led the way."

Yes, brethren, our great Joshua will assuredly bring us into the promised land, Jordan or no Jordan. We shall have our lot and our inheritance beyond the river; that is, if we truly trust in him. How about that matter? Are you resting in Jesus Christ the one Mediator between God and men? Have you faith in the living God? A living people must have a living God. Oh, if your money is your god, if your belly is your god, if this world is your god, if Satan is your god, you will have Egypt's doom; but if, through Christ Jesus the Lord, God is your one hope, and joy, and confidence, then be not afraid, for he will lead you through the wilderness, and he will bring you into your eternal rest. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXXVII.

It may be, beloved friends, that there is a word of comfort for some of you in this "Psalm of David." If any of you have been perplexed and worried, and there has been a stern conflict within your spirit, here are some cheering words which will bring a message from God to you.

It may be worth your while to remember that the 37th Psalm and the 73rd are upon the same subject. They are the same figures reversed, but they both deal with the great mystery which has vexed the hearts of godly men in all generations.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

What a contrast there is between the grass before the mower comes with his scythe, and that same grass when it is cut down; and there is the same kind of difference between the glory of ungodly men at one moment and their destruction the next. How beautiful the fertile mead appears before you with its many-coloured flowers, yet in how short a time all its beauties are cut down, and withered in the sun!

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

The psalmist begins with "Fret not thyself, . . . neither be thou envious;" but he advances to something higher. He seeks to lead his hearer or reader up to "trust in the Lord," and then still further up to

"delight in the Lord." A Christian should constantly be on the rising scale; though he is ever in the way of change, it should be a change for the better. Take care, dear friends, that you are people of simple trust: "Trust in the Lord;" and then you shall advance to delight in him: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

5, 6. *Commit thy way unto the* LORD; *trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

It may be very dark with you just now, but God will turn your midnight into noonday. It is only he who can do it, therefore be sure to commit your way unto him; "trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

7. *Rest in the* LORD,—

Not only rest on him, but rest in him, get into such close fellowship with him that you do really "rest in the Lord,"—

7, 8. *And wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

It is fretting that leads to anger and all manner of evil; but when the heart truly rests in God, it forsakes wrath. When we get away from resting in the Lord, we soon drift out upon a very stormy sea, where our poor little barques are not able to hold their own; therefore is it most needful for us to obey the injunction, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

9, 10. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the* LORD, *they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

The very house he inhabited, the grand estate which he called his own, shall be called by the name of another owner, and he shall be blotted out of remembrance.

11—15. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.*

They were so eager "to cast down the poor and needy" that they used both sword and bow against them, yet they could not succeed in their evil designs; for God took care of his own people, and therefore the psalmist was able to say concerning their enemies, "Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken."

16. *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*

"Many wicked." That is a strong expression; the psalmist does not merely mention the riches of one wicked man, but he says, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the* LORD *upholdeth the righteous.*

He keeps on upholding them. He holds them up, and in another sense he lifts them up on high, and holds them up near to himself in the glorious sunshine of fellowship with him.

18. *The* LORD *knoweth the days of the upright:*

He is well acquainted with their bright days and their dark days. He

keeps a diary of all their ever-changing experiences: "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright":—

18. *And their inheritance shall be for ever.*

There is an entail upon covenant blessings, which ensures their enjoyment by all the chosen seed, and they shall never be taken from them: "Their inheritance shall be for ever."

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

They shall not only get, as we say, "a sup and a bite," but "they shall be satisfied," and that even "in the days of famine," when other people starve. They are well fed whom God feeds; there is no table like the one furnished and supplied by Omnipotence. He who is infinite in resources can readily supply all our necessities.

20, 21. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*

He prefers to do that rather than to lend; it generally comes to the same thing in the long run, and he may as well know from the first what he is really doing: "The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth."

22, 23. *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

What a beautiful expression that is, "the steps of a good man"—the very steps, the little things, the daily actions, the ordinary progress of a good man,—"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way." Our way is sometimes rough, but if God takes a delight in it, it must be right. It is a joy to us to know that the lives of godly men are delightful to the Most High.

24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

There may be a stumble, or even a fall, and he will grieve over it; he may suffer great losses, and he may think that there is an end to his mercies, but it shall not be so. God's servants are like the sheep; they may fall many times, but they are soon up again. Hypocrites are like the swine; when they fall, they wallow in the mire, which is their congenial element.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

David had not seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but we have often seen it; for, when the seed of the righteous do not behave themselves aright, they have to suffer poverty as well as other people. But, under the old covenant, David could truly say that he had not seen this grievous sight. Yet many of us could go as far as David did in the first part of the verse: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." No, that shall never be the case; and it is a very singular circumstance, which they who have to distribute charity have often noticed, how seldom, comparatively, do they find godly people very greatly reduced. Somehow or other, God does provide for them. The trouble we have with our Orphanages is to find the orphans of godly men and women, for they are very few compared with those of other people. You may look over any list you like, and you shall find that very seldom are the saints reduced to absolute poverty. Yet, when poverty does come, and it does come to some of the very best of men and women, then God

blesses it to them, and bears them up beneath it, so that they do not really lack any good thing. As for the gracious man,—

26—37. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the* LORD *loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The* LORD *will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the* LORD, *and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*

When you come to sum up the whole of his life, the total of it amounts to this,—"peace." After all his varied experiences, God did give him rest; and with all the turmoil and tossing which came upon him occasionally, still he was a man to be envied. It is the end to which we must always look, after all; and concerning the perfect and upright man the psalmist says, "the end of that man is peace."

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the* LORD:

It is not the result of their own goodness or merit; but it is wholly "of the Lord." Righteous men are saved men because the Lord saves them by his grace, and that is where they put their confidence.

39. *He is their strength in the time of trouble.*

Dwell on that sweet short sentence. Not only does the Lord give them strength, but he himself "is their strength in the time of trouble." He is so near to his people that all the omnipotence of his Godhead is theirs. Are you in trouble just now, dear child of God? Well, you have strength enough to carry you through it all if this be true, as it is, "He is their strength in the time of trouble." If God himself is your strength, do not talk about being weak; of course you are weakness itself apart from him, do not expect to be anything other than that; but then remember the psalmist's declaration, "He is their strength in the time of trouble."

40. *And the* LORD *shall help them,*—

Do you want anything more than this great promise? You have a heavy load to carry, but it is nothing to him who is omnipotent: "The Lord shall help them,"—

40. *And deliver them:*

He shall help them while they are in the trouble, and bring them out of it in due time.

40. *He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.*

O dear friends, lean hard upon God! Lay down all your burdens at your Saviour's feet, and rest there in holy and happy confidence in him. May the Lord give to all of us the grace to enjoy this sweet rest, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 114, 885, 846.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DEW OF CHRIST'S YOUTH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 28TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, early in the year 1859.

"Thou hast the dew of thy youth."—Psalm cx. 3.

WHEN you have walked in the garden, early in the morning, you must have remarked the singular freshness and beauty which a summer's morning always seems to give to the earth; the dewdrops, like tears standing in the eyes of the flowers, as if they wept for joy to see the sun again after the long night of darkness, sparkle in the sun; the greenness of vegetation has about it a more than emerald hue, and every "thing of beauty" looks more beautiful in the morning than at any other season. You have gone out again, perhaps, at noon, and you have noticed how dry and dusty everything appears; for the sun has risen, and by his burning heat he has exhaled the dew, and the freshness of the morning has departed in the drought of noon. Now, this is just a picture of all things here below; ay, and a picture of ourselves also. When we first behold many things, they have the dew upon them, and they sparkle; but in a little while, all their brightness is gone, and their brilliance scattered. Some of you have entered into pleasure, and you have found it a delusion; you have intermeddled with all kinds of knowledge, and you have found that, in the making and reading of books, there was much pleasure; but, ere long, you have discovered that, in reading many books, and in making them, there was no end, and much study was a weariness to the flesh.

Everything terrestrial has its dew in the morning, but its burning heat at noon; and we too, beloved,—I mean those of us who have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit,—is not this too much the case even with us? When we were first converted, what a sparkling dew there was upon our leaf! We could not sing God's praises loudly enough; we could not sufficiently leap for joy before the ark of the Lord. All the exultations of those who came before seemed utterly insufficient for us. There was, to us, such unction and savour in the Word, that we could feast upon it every day,—yea, and all night long, and yet never be weary. We ran in the way of God's commandments without weariness, and we mounted aloft as

on the wings of eagles, and never thought that we could ascend too high. But, alas! beloved, is it not the case with many of us, that much of that early freshness of the morning of our youth is scattered, and some, at least, of our excellence hath proved to be like the early cloud and the morning dew? Though in some things we trust that we have grown, yet we are compelled to confess that, in some other things, we have diminished; while in the depths of self-knowledge we feel that we have made progress, yet in the heights of joy in Christ, in the sublimities of a full devotion to him, we sometimes fear that we have gone backward, and that we have not the bliss of our youth, the dew of the morning.

Our text, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, says he has the dew of his youth. We are certain that it is Jesus Christ who is spoken of in this Psalm, for, in arguing with the Pharisees, he quoted the first verse, and applied it to himself: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." So that no doubt this third verse also alludes to him: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." Having, therefore, set ourselves and all terrestrial matters in contrast with him, it only remains for me now to enter, as fully as God may help me, into the sweet doctrine of this text,—that Jesus Christ ever has had, and ever will have, the early dew, freshness, and brilliance of his youth. First, permit me *to state the fact;* secondly, *to show the reasons for it;* and, thirdly, *to deduce the lessons from it.*

I. First of all, let me STATE THE FACT, THAT CHRIST HAS THE DEW OF HIS YOUTH.

Let me first speak of *Christ personally;* has he not all the freshness, all the vigour, all the strength of ancient times? His goings forth were of old, even from eternity; and behold he still goeth forth, every day, in the preaching of his Word, and in the ministrations of his Spirit. In the chariots of salvation still rideth he forth, and among the golden candlesticks he walketh still. Have we ever imagined that he has lost the strength of his youth? Do his steps falter? Has his arm begun to feel the palsying influence of old age? Is there any sign of decrepitude or of wasting away upon his majestic brow? When John saw him, in Patmos, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," for he is the Eternal of Ages; yet, as saith the spouse in the Canticles, "His locks are bushy, and black as a raven," for he has the strength of a youth, while he has the ages of eternity upon him. Well might he now rise up before us, and ask concerning himself personally, "Is mine ear heavy that I cannot hear? Is mine arm shortened that I cannot save? Am I not to-day what I was yesterday? Was I the Creator of the world? Did I speak it out of nothingness; and am I not still its Sustainer? Was I the Redeemer of the Church? Did I purchase her with mine own blood; and do I not still sustain with power those whom I redeemed with blood? Did I not on earth, with cries and groans, offer up my prayer before my Father; and do I not now plead, not with less

vigour but with greater strength, when with authority I advocate my people's cause before his throne?"

Nor is this freshness confined to Christ in his person; it is the same if you *think of him as revealed in his doctrine.* We have Christ among us now, not incarnate in flesh, but incarnate in doctrine. The doctrines of grace are in a certain sense the body of Christ. We speak sometimes of a Body of Divinity; but if any man would know what the true Body of Divinity is, let him learn that it is neither Calvin's "Institutes," nor Dwight's "Theology," nor Gill's "Body of Divinity,"—it is Christ who is *the* Body of Divinity. His was the only body Divinity ever did take when it became incarnate; but taking Divinity, in another sense, to mean Divine doctrine, what Christ said, and what he did,—that is, the gospel—is the only body which Divinity ever will take. The gospel is always fresh. There are many subjects, beloved, that get exhausted after a while; but who ever heard of the gospel being exhausted? You have, some of you, come up to the house of God these thirty or forty years; did you ever feel that you wanted anything newer than the gospel? Did you ever say, as you went out, after you had heard a gospel sermon, "I should like to have some improvements made upon it"? No; if you have heard God's truth proclaimed, have you not said, "That was the food of my childhood in grace, it is my food now that, by reason of years, I am able to discern between that which is good and that which is evil, and it shall be my food all through the wilderness, and until I eat of the corn of the kingdom on the other side of Jordan"?

It is a wonderful thing, I have often thought, that any man should be able, day after day, and week after week, to attract thousands of people to hear him talk. I do not believe any man could do it with any other subject except the gospel. I have the most intense respect for that great man and mighty orator, Mr. Gough; but, with all his ability, if he were to deliver a teetotal lecture, twice every Sabbath day, in any pulpit in England, he could not command a congregation for twenty-one years at a stretch; but the Christian minister, with only one subject,—Christ crucified,—may not only keep on for twenty-one years, but if he should live as long as Methuselah, he might still keep on preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and he would still find that the people of God would come to hear him, and never crave for a fresh subject. Let any great historian open, if he please, a lecture-room, and attempt to deliver two lectures upon history every week, and let him see whether he does not find the congregation, which might at first gather around him, speedily diminished. We have had an instance, in London, of one who has delivered an amusing lecture a thousand times, always to great multitudes; but then they were different persons every time. No one thought of going to hear him lecture upon the same subject the whole thousand times; it would have become a most intolerable penance even to have heard Albert Smith delivering his lecture upon Mont Blanc so often, however interesting it might have been once or twice; it would certainly pall upon the mind if we heard it so many times; but the Christian

minister may keep on, and on, and on with the same theme,—Christ Jesus, Christ Jesus; the same cross, the same crown of thorns, the same bleeding wounds,—from the first time that he enters his pulpit to the last when he lays down his charge; and the people may always say, and he can always feel, that the gospel has the dew of its youth upon it, and is always fresh and ever new.

Our text is also *specially true of Christ as revealed in the Bible.* There are many other valuable books that have been written; but, as a rule, however valuable they may be, when you have read them half-a-dozen times, you may be quite satisfied that you need not read them any more. Next to the Bible, the book that I value most is John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and I imagine I may have read that through perhaps a hundred times; it is a book of which I never seem to tire, but then the secret of that is, that John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is the Bible in another shape. It is the same heavenly water taken out of this same well of the gospel; yet you would tire even of that book at last. You would say, "I know all that this volume contains, and I want something more. Here is the experience of the Christian pilgrim; I know it is true, and I delight in it, but I want to go somewhat further." The mind would crave for something else. But read the Bible; and, strange to say, the more you read it, the more satisfied you will be with it. When you begin to read the Bible, perhaps you want fifty other books in order that you may become a thorough Bible student; but your library will gradually diminish until, at last, the more you understand the Bible, the fewer books you will need, and you will come to say, "If I might have all my days over again, this should be the only book that I would study, and I would concentrate all my powers upon the understanding of this one volume." You can get to the bottom of all other books; you dive into them, and at first they seem to be very deep; but every time you plunge, they appear to get shallower and shallower, until at last you can see the bottom at a glance. But in God's Word, every time you dive, the depths grow deeper. The first time you read a text, in your ignorant conceit you fancy you have learned the full meaning of it; but you look at it again, and you find that, though you had the meaning in one sense, yet you had not the full meaning; and you dive again, and again, and again, and you find, each time you dive, that the meaning is still far beyond your reach, and that the Bible is altogether above your comprehension. It expands, it grows, it continually increases in interest. There is such a charm about the Bible, that he who reads it but little can never feel the full force of it. It is something like the maelstrom you have heard of, only in a different and more excellent sense. The maelstrom is a great whirlpool on the coast of Norway. A ship, at a long distance from it, will feel something of its attractive influence,—a very little, yet enough to make it veer from its course; but the nearer it gets to the whirlpool, the stronger becomes the current, and the more forcibly is the vessel carried along by it, until, at last, the ship is drawn near, whirled round at a tremendous rate, and then engulfed in its depths. In a higher and better sense,

the like is true of the Bible. The nearer you go to it, the more closely you study it, the more voraciously you devour its contents, the more rapidly do you revolve in its circles, until at last you are swallowed up in its glory, and seem to long for nothing else than to prove the heights and depths of this bliss unfathomable,—the love of God in Christ Jesus as revealed to us in his sacred Word. Truly, we may say to the Bible, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth."

Again, I may add, *everything that has to do with Christ is always young*. The beds of spices where he lieth are always green; the trees planted by him will never wither, their fruits will always come to perfection. Everything lives where he is; for he is life, and in him there is no death at all; and because he is life, he is always full of freshness, and therefore doth he scatter living force whereso-ever he goeth. All this we shall best know when we shall follow him to the living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

II. Now let us turn to the second point, and enquire, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS FRESHNESS? What is the reason why Christ Jesus, and his gospel, and his Word, and all things about him, are always so fresh? Why have we always an abiding dew upon these holy things?

I answer, first, no man, who understands what it is to have Christ in his heart, *will ever get tired of him through want of variety*. The reason why we get tired of a thing is generally because, as we say, there is a sameness about it. There are many men who have a weighty message to deliver, consisting of very good matter; but, dear me! it is a pain to sit and listen to them, because they deliver all their words in a monotone; they always speak as if they were striking a bell, and word follows word, with no difference of tone. Now, the human ear loves variety; it cannot bear monotony. And so is it with the whole of our manhood; nothing monotonous will long retain its freshness. However sweet the music might be, if we always heard the same notes, we should most assuredly be as disgusted with even the music of an archangel, if we were compelled to hear it all day and all night long, as we are with the cackling of a goose. Everything is apt to lose its interest when it is repeated over and over again; but there is no fear of any monotony or tautology in Christ. You may look at Christ a thousand times, and you shall have, if you please, a thousand different aspects of his beauty.

If you turn to the Old Testament, you can see him in a vast variety of forms. You can see him as the paschal lamb and as the scapegoat; you can see him at one time as the bullock, strong to labour, and at another time as the lamb, patient to endure; you can see him as the dove, full of innocence; you can see him in the blood sprinkled, in the incense burning, in the laver filled with water, in Aaron's rod that budded, in the golden pot that was full of manna; in the ark, you can see him having the law within his heart; and over the ark, you can see the golden light of the Shekinah above the mercy-seat, and say, "Christ is here." In every type,

you may see Christ, and in so many different shapes, too, that you can say, "Turn this whichever way I like, there is always something fresh in it." Christ, if I may compare so glorious a Person to so humble a thing, is like the kaleidoscope. As often as you look through it, you see a fresh arrangement of colours, and a new design, and, in like manner, as often as you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you always discover some new beauty in him.

When you have done with looking at him typically, look at him officially. You have not time to consider all his glories as a Priest, —you have hardly passed your eyes over his flowing vesture, and his glittering breastplate, and listened to the ringing of the bells, and marked the beauty of the pomegranates, before you see him come forth as a King; and you can scarcely stop to look at the many crowns on his head before he comes forth as a Prophet; and you have hardly time to admire him as a Prophet before he comes forth as Mediator, as Shepherd, as Captain of our salvation, as Head of the Church, as the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. If you go further, and look at his person, you will see what a wonderful variety there is in him. You see him as the Child born, the Son given; when he comes into this world, you know him to be God, and you are lost in admiration of his Deity; you also know him to be man, and you still stand astonished when you regard him in that aspect as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The reason why everything else loses its freshness to us is because of its want of variety. You may go to any exhibition that has ever been opened to attract attention and awaken interest; but you will find that, after a certain time, there is a want of variety in it; but with Christ there never is such a lack, and therefore to the mind's eye he always has the dew of his youth.

There is also another reason; Christ has the dew of his youth *because of his excellence.* To-day, stepping in to see a gentleman, I observed a table which had upon it a great variety of objects. I wondered what they were, and took the liberty of asking him. He told me that he had some beautiful stereoscopic views there, which had been taken at an immense expense in Egypt, in the Holy Land, and in all parts of the world; and he showed me one or two Scriptural subjects which very much interested me. They were certainly pre-eminently excellent as works of art. He said, "There, sir, I never get tired of looking at these slides; I could examine them constantly, and never be weary of them." "Well," I said, "I can quite understand that; they are so excellent; for, really, there is half-an-hour's study in this one picture; and then one might begin again, it is so full of beauty, and it seems so true to the original." But I thought to myself, "Excellent as they are, I think, if I call to see my friend in a year's time, he will tell me that he has had to buy a fresh set of views, for he has been looking at these others so often that he has become altogether tired of them." They would not have any freshness to him, because he had seen them so many times. But mark, the reason why he could look at them so often was because they were so excellent. If they had been poor pictures, if there had not been great skill and art bestowed

upon them, he would soon have become weary of looking at them. There are some views in nature which a man might gaze upon a hundred times, and yet always wonder at them; but the reason is, because they are so beautiful. There are other things that might strike one at first, but which, when they were looked into more closely, would lose their freshness, because there would be no real ground for admiration, no excellence in them. But Christ Jesus will always have the dew of his youth, because he is always so excellent.

Ah, brethren! you thought Christ was sweet when first you tasted him; but you will know him to be sweeter still when you know more of him, and taste and see that he is good; but you can never know all his sweetness, for you can eat, and eat, and eat to the full, and yet not discover it all; possibly, scarcely in heaven itself will you know all the sweetness of Christ. You imagine, perhaps, that you know how great is his love to you; but remember, it passeth knowledge. You think that you have fully proved his faithfulness; but you have not proved it as you will yet do. All the tests to which you have ever put the Saviour, it may be, are but little compared with those that are to come after. You have proved him with the footmen, you shall soon prove him with the horsemen; you have proved him in the land of peace, you shall soon prove him in the swellings of Jordan. But the more you test and try him, the more shall you discover that he is excellent, and worth the proving; and because his excellence shall become more and more manifest, the more you look at him, you shall say to him continually, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth. I find thee better and better. Fairest of the sons of men, thou growest fairer every day! Bread of heaven, thou becomest sweeter to my taste every hour! Thou wast once like wafers made with honey; thou art sweeter than angels' food now. Water of life, thou growest more cooling to my tongue, and more refreshing to my thirst continually! I loved thee as soon as I knew thee; but I love thee more now; I delighted in thee once, but I delight in thee more fully now."

Still, I do not know but that the most excellent thing you and I have ever seen would, in time, lose its freshness to us, because we should discover all its excellence; but Christ will never lose his freshness to us, *because he is divine*. Whatever is not divine, in due time must lose its freshness. Suppose the Lord should give to us, to engross our attention and to interest us, the whole fields of space. Suppose, in eternity, the Lord should say, "Now I will give to you the works of my creation to be for ever the objects of your attention." My dear friends, there is enough in a single flower, the botanist tells us, to occupy a man's wonder and admiration for a number of years. There is so much skill and wisdom in but a single flower of the field, that a man might look and wonder as long as that. Well, just put together all the flowers and all the creatures of this world, and all the mighty rocks that are full of such marvellous secrets, and imagine that these are to be the objects of our eternal study and interest. I can suppose that a man would exhaust all the knowledge of this world in due time; it might take him thousands

upon thousands of years, yet I can imagine that he might so fully examine everything that is noble and grand in this world, that at last he could sit down, and say, "I know every secret of nature here upon the earth; I have made every rock tell out its story; I have dived into every mine of truth, and I have ransacked all its secret treasures; but there are the stars for me yet to look at." So picture the man going from star to star, and discovering all the wonders of God in the seemingly boundless universe. Here is a great conception for you. Imagine that all these stars were inhabited, and all full of fresh wonders; yet I can understand that, after myriads and myriads of years, all these marvels might be exhausted. Some stupendous mind, growing by that upon which it fed, might at last say, of all the secrets of God's works, "I know them all. I have found out every wonder, and all the storehouses of God's wisdom have I ransacked;" but, beloved, Jesus Christ is such a boundless field of knowledge, in him there is such a gathering up of all the secrets of God, that the whole of eternity must be exhausted before we could learn them all. He will have, he must have for ever, the dew of his youth, because he is divine. The wing of knowledge, though it had all the fields of space to fly in, must at last reach a boundary. The ship of wisdom, though it should sail across the sea that seems without a shore,—the as yet unnavigated sea of ether,—must at last reach a haven; but give a man Christ to be the subject of study, the object to awaken his interest and excite his wonder, and then you have indeed shot an arrow which shall never reach its mark; it shall fly on, on, on, and shall never stay. You have bidden the man plunge into a bottomless ocean. You have launched him, like Noah's ark, upon a sea without a shore. He may go on, and on, and on, but he can never reach the end of that voyage. Christ must for ever be full of interest to him, because he is divine, and, therefore, inexhaustible.

Another reason why Christ will always have the dew of his youth is, *because he meets all the cravings of our nature.* Suppose I am introduced into a place full of the wonderful works of man. I look, and I look on; but why is it that I get tired of them, however interesting they may be? Because they only appeal to my eye. But suppose that there is the sweetest music at the same time, then I have something for my ear. Why is it that, even then, I get tired? Because I have another craving,—I hunger and I thirst. But suppose I have the richest dainties set before me; and I sit and feast, and look, and hear sweet sounds all the time, why is it that, even then, I should, after a time, however excellent might be the entertainment, grow tired? Why, because I have other propensities that are not brought into play, and other desires which have not their fair room for exercise. But suppose me to become like Solomon, so that I have all which the eye, or the ear, or the passions can delight in; should I, after all, be tired? Yes; Solomon tried it, and he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Why? Because there were other cravings in Solomon which all these things did not satisfy; his mind was hungering after knowledge; and when Solomon satisfied that, for he spake of all things, from the hyssop

on the wall up to the cedar of Lebanon, there was one thing that was still not satisfied, that was his soul. His immortal spirit was longing for communion with his God; there was a hunger and thirst after something higher than mere mental food. His mind could not be contented with wine to drink and meat to eat, for it wanted knowledge; and his spirit could not be satisfied with mere knowledge, for it needed something higher than that,—the ethereal and celestial ambrosia of the glorified. His spirit was panting for communion with God, and therefore Solomon felt that all here was vanity, because it could not satisfy that craving.

Give me Christ, and I have no desire for anything beyond him, for Christ is all. Whatever of good we may wish for, it is all in Christ; it is impossible for the mind that is filled with Christ to imagine anything else; and in the day when we shall get to heaven, —we talk a great deal about golden harps, and golden crowns, and golden streets,—I imagine we shall find that all those harps and crowns and streets are contained in that one word "Christ." When we really have Christ, we feel that we have nothing else that we can wish for. He that drinketh desireth to eat, but he that drinketh Christ drinketh food. He that eats desires to be clothed, but he that feedeth on Christ is clothed at the same time. He that is clothed needeth something wherewithal to adorn himself, but he that is clothed in the righteousness of Christ is robed in the court dress of heaven, and hath all the jewels of Divinity upon him. He that is adorned yet needeth something wherewithal to wash himself and keep himself beauteous, but he that is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and adorned with God's grace, is washed, and is clean every whit. He that is clean needs to be kept clean; but he that has Christ shall be kept clean. Dear friends, there is nothing that a sinner can want, there is nothing that a saint can want, that is not in Christ. There are many things that we think we want that are not in him, but nothing we really need that is not in him, for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and the fulness of the Godhead must be more than sufficient fulness for manhood. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and if all fulness cannot meet our wants, what can? Therefore, shall we never be weary of Christ, because every craving of the heart is satisfied in him.

I will mention only one other reason why Christ will always have the dew of his youth. We shall never be tired of Christ, *because the need that we have of Christ can never cease.* While I am on earth, I shall never cease sinning; therefore I shall never cease to need the fountain filled with blood where I can wash away all my guilty stains. So long as I am here, my conscience will never leave off accusing me; therefore I shall ever need an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. While I am here, I shall never be free from trouble; therefore I shall always need him who is the Consolation of Israel. While I am here, I shall never get rid of weakness; therefore I can never bear to be without him who is my strength. While I am here, I shall never, I fear, cease from

backsliding in some measure; therefore can I never cease to love him who restoreth my soul, and leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

You have heard, perhaps, the story of a party of travellers who were crossing the desert; they had exhausted all their supply of water, and they knew not where they should find any. But, at last, after some days' march, they came near a turbid stream of the most filthy water, and in dashed the camels, and defiled it still worse. Yet the poor travellers, who had come across the arid desert, were so thirsty that they drank what was more earth than water, and thought it sweeter than any wine they had ever tasted. But after they had satisfied their thirst, did they still think so? Did they then say the water was sweet? No; they understood then what it was they had been drinking; and after their thirst was once quenched, you could not have compelled them to drink there again until the thirst returned in all its force. But so long as the Christian is here, he will always have the pangs of hunger, he will always have all the sufferings of spiritual thirst if Christ be removed from him, and, therefore, that longing will always make Christ sweet to him. Our Lord must ever have the dew of his youth upon him, because we shall always have an appetite for him as long as we are here; or if we lose it for a little while,—for fools will abhor all manner of meat sometimes,—yet that appetite must and shall return, and we shall again fly to those living waters as with the wings of a dove, and hasten again to those cooling streams with all the speed of the panting hart that longs after the water-brook, for it must drink or die. Therefore, beloved, you see yet again that, because we shall always need Christ, therefore will he always be fresh to us.

"But," says one, "we shall not need him in heaven." Who told you that? Whoever told you so, has certainly misled you. Not need Christ in heaven! Why, beloved, if you could take Christ away from heaven, you would take heaven away altogether, and leave every saint in hell. They do not "want" Christ in heaven, in one sense of the word, because they have him; therefore they do not "want" him as the Scotch use the word "want." But they still need to have Christ with them every hour, for he is the sum and substance of heaven. If I shall not need Christ to cleanse me in heaven, yet I shall want Christ to commune with him. If I shall not need his blood to wash me, yet I shall need the offering of praise wherewith to bless and honour God. If I shall not need to pray to him, I shall want to praise him. If I shall not need him to forgive me, yet I shall want him to embrace me. If I shall not need him as a Shepherd, I shall need him as a Husband, as a Priest, as a King, that I may for ever serve him with joy and gladness.

III. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THIS TRUTH?

The first is for the pulpit, *a lesson of admonition.* Dear brethren, we who occupy the pulpit must take care that we never, for a moment, entertain the idea that the gospel has become worn out. It still has the dew of its youth. There is a good deal of nonsense talked about a gospel adapted to the times. People say that the

way Whitefield preached, and the way that John Berridge and Rowland Hill preached, was all wrong. True, many sinners were converted under their ministry; but, you know, sinners then were different from the sinners of these days, who do not need the same sort of preaching. Some say that the devil himself is improved, but I find him worse if anything,—improved the wrong way. They say that sinners are improved, and do not need to be addressed with the same fiery, burning words as of old; they say that they do not need the same simple preaching of Christ. The nineteenth century has become so learned that it has advanced beyond the simple knowledge of Christ crucified, it has become so erudite, that the simplicity of the gospel is far behind it, it has marched on so far ahead that it has left the cross miles in the rear.

Do not believe them for a moment, my dear brethren; if you want to wake up the people of England, preach the old-fashioned gospel; if you want to crowd your halls, and gather thousands round you, it is the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, that you must preach. As for the manner and style of your preaching, you may leave that to the occasion; and stick to your subject, the simple gospel in all its freshness and glory. Pentecostal youth shall be seen in the gospel again when it is preached in all its fulness and purity. I know why some preachers like to be obscure; it is because it gives a man a peculiar kind of popularity. I believe some people like to hear a man whom they cannot understand; and some, when they hear a man they can only just comprehend, are very flattered, because the minister seems to say to them, "Now, you know that you are all very clever people, I must therefore preach you a very clever sermon;" and then they feel pleased that the minister should have such a good opinion of them, and should think them so clever. But when you go to hear some plain blunt man, who just simply tells out the gospel, and who believes that, to try to be eloquent when he is preaching would be just as stupid as to paint the rose or to whitewash the lily, then you say, "Well, now, he did not compliment me; why! he talked to me and all of us as if we had been a common lot of clod-hoppers and crossing-sweepers. He told us just the simple story of the cross, and there is nothing flattering in that." Ay! and, by the grace of God, I trust that from our pulpits there will never be anything taught that is flattering to you. I hope each one of us will be able to say, with the apostle Paul, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Be you assured that there will be more unction resting upon the enunciation of the simple truths of the gospel, there will be more freshness to the hearers, than there will be upon the most polished oratory garnished with almost seraphic eloquence, and elaborated until it grows far beyond the comprehension of ordinary intellects. That lesson is for the pulpit.

The second lesson is a caution, *a lesson of self-examination* to each one here present. Do you, dear friend, take less interest in the gospel than you used to do? Do you find that it has become dull to you, and that even Christ himself has lost his freshness to you? Christ has not really lost his freshness, though you may have lost yours. What you should ask yourself is, "Have I found the right Christ? If the Christ I have found has lost his freshness, is it not very likely that I have found a wrong christ, one of my own making, one of my own conception? For the real Christ is always fresh, always interesting, always new. Have I not either laid hold of the wrong truth, or held it in the wrong way?" I said, "the wrong truth;" have I contradicted myself? Yet that is the palpable contradiction of this age. One man says, "Yes," and another man says, "No." I am told that it is uncharitable to say that another man is wrong if I am right; but I cannot make it out how both are to be right, or how yea and nay are to be made to agree together. He is a clever man who is able to tie the tails of yes and no together, and make them run in the same row. The fact is, if you have lost your interest in the gospel, it is not the right one that you have received, or else you never really accepted it; if you have lost your interest in Christ, it is because it is not the Christ of God in whom you were interested. It is very probable that, if your former zeal and your former delight in Christ have departed, you have made a mistake; and it is well that you should question yourselves very solemnly, lest you should be found building upon the sand when you thought you were building upon the Rock of ages.

I have just another word to add, and that is, *a word of aspiration*. If Christ has the dew of his youth upon him, let us, my dear friends who serve the Lord Jesus Christ, aspire to show the world that we do so. In the olden time, the dew of Christ's youth made his people love him so much that they were ready to die for him; they gave all their substance to him; they lived a life of shame, and they were prepared to die a death of pain. Now let us prove to the world that Christianity has not lost its ancient vigour, that there is a godly seed yet left in the earth, and that the arm of the Church is not withered. Let us prove to the world that, as Christ made his people holy in olden time, he makes his people holy now; and that, as the religion of Christ made men disinterested, and devoted to him, zealous for his cause, prepared them to live, and helped them to die, it can do so now. It is for you and for me to prove to the world that our religion has not lost its force by letting them see its influence in our daily life. Emulate the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors; seek to live like the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and like that noble company of the apostles; and when you shall live the holy and devoted lives they did, then shall all the world say, "These men have been with Christ, for they have the dew of the youth of Christianity upon them. They are like the early Christians, and therefore the old religion has not grown old, so as to be likely to depart and pass away."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ELIJAH FAINTING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 5TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, July 1st, 1880.

"He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."—1 Kings xix. 4.

WHEN we read the Scriptures in our youth, we are often astonished at the peculiar conditions in which we find even good men. It is difficult for us to understand why David could be in such sore distress, and why such a man as Elijah could be so dreadfully downcast. As we get older, and become more experienced, as trials multiply around us, and our inner life enters upon a sterner conflict, as the babe grows to manhood, and therefore is entrusted with heavier tasks, we can better understand why God allowed his ancient servants to be put into such peculiar positions, for we find ourselves in similar places, and we are relieved by discovering that we are walking along a path which others have traversed before us. It might puzzle us to tell why Elijah should get under a juniper bush. We can understand his attitude on Mount Carmel, and comprehend his hewing the prophets of Baal in pieces; but we ask, in perplexity, "What doest thou here, Elijah, under a juniper, or away there in a cave on the hill-side?" But when we get under the juniper ourselves, we are glad to recall the fact that Elijah once sat there; and when we are hiding away in the cave, it is a source of comfort to us to remember that such a man as this great prophet of Israel was there before us. The experience of one saint is instructive to others. Many of those Psalms which are headed "Maschil" or instructive Psalms record the experience of the writer, and therefore become the lesson-book for others.

I may be, at this time, addressing some of the Lord's children who have prayed Elijah's prayer; I know one who, in the bitterness of his soul, has often prayed it; and, if God the Comforter shall guide me, I may be able to say something that shall help such an one in this his time of trial. If I should be permitted to come, as God's

angel, to smite some sleeper on the side, and wake him up to eat of spiritual meat which shall cause him to forget his sorrow, it shall be well. I will, first, speak about *Elijah's weakness;* and then, in the second place, about *God's tenderness to him.*

I. First, I am going to speak about ELIJAH'S WEAKNESS.

Only a few days before, he had stood on Mount Carmel as the mighty prophet of God, and had brought down first fire and then water from heaven;—he seemed to have the very keys of the skies, and to be girt almost with omnipotence to do whatever he would when he lifted up his voice in prayer;—yet, soon after, he was fleeing from the face of Jezebel, lest she should take him, and put him to death; and here we find him, after a long flight, in the wilderness, sitting down under a juniper bush, seeking to find a scanty shelter there, and entreating that he may die. How came all this about?

Well, the first reason is, that *he was a man of like passions with ourselves.* I suppose that the apostle James would hardly have said that concerning him if he had not perceived its truth in this particular instance. We used to have, in England, a great leader who is still called "The Iron Duke." I think we might have called Elijah "The Iron Prophet." He seemed to leap into the field of action like a lion from the forest; what strength and courage he had! He seemed to have nothing of the timidity, and trembling, and weakness of ordinary manhood; he was a very athlete in the service of God, girding up his loins, and running before Ahab's chariot. Yet here we see that he was indeed a man of like passions with ourselves. He, too, could be impatient; he, too, could be petulant; he, too, could grow weary of his appointed service, and ask to be allowed to die. You have often heard me say that the best of men are but men at the best. The other day, somebody wrote me a letter to tell me that sentence was not true. All I could reply was, "No doubt, my good friend, you know yourself; and if, at your best, you are not a man, I do not know what you are; you must be something worse;" and there I left him. But I believe that, when a man is as good as he can be, he is still only a man; and as a man, while he is here, he is compassed with infirmities. Elias was not only a man of passions, but a man of like passions with ourselves;—a man who could suffer, and suffer intensely, one whose spirit could be depressed even to the very uttermost, just as the spirit of any one of us might be. He failed, as all God's people have done; I scarcely know of any exception in all the biographies of the Old or New Testament.

Elijah failed in the very point at which he was strongest, and that is where most men fail. In Scripture, it is the wisest man who proves himself to be the greatest fool; just as the meekest man, Moses, spoke hasty and bitter words. Abraham failed in his faith, and Job in his patience; so, he who was the most courageous of all men, fled from an angry woman. He could stand face to face with that woman's husband, and say to him, in answer to his false accusation, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and

thou hast followed Baalim;" yet he was afraid of Jezebel, and he fled from her, and suffered such faintness of heart that he even "requested for himself that he might die." This was, I suppose, to show us that Elijah was not strong by nature, but only in the strength imparted to him by God; so that, when the divine strength was gone, he was of no more account than anybody else. When grace is for a time withdrawn, the natural Elijah is as weak as any other natural man; it is only when supernatural power is working through him that he rises out of himself, and so the grace of God is glorified in him.

It is some comfort to us when we see that we are not the only persons who have failed through the infirmity of the flesh. I do not hold up Elijah's passions as any excuse for us indulging them; but if any are almost driven to despair because such passions have overcome them, let them shake off that despair. Nobody doubts that Elijah was a child of God; nobody questions the fact that God loved him even when he sat fainting under the juniper tree, for he manifested special love to him then; so let no despondent heart, no broken spirit, no discouraged soul say,—

> "My God hath forsaken me quite,
> My God will be gracious no more;"—

for it is not true. The Lord did not forsake Elias, and he will not forsake you if you trust in him; yet it may be that both you and Elijah have cherished passions of which he does not approve.

But, next, let us notice that this faintness of heart of Elijah was, no doubt, *the result of a terrible reaction which had come upon his whole frame.* On that memorable day, when all Israel was gathered together, and he stood forth as a lone man to champion the cause of Jehovah, having the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the groves in opposition to him, there must have been a strong excitement upon him. You can see that he was not very calm when the two altars stood side by side, and the prophets of Baal from morning till noon cried in vain, "O Baal, hear us." Somehow, I like to think of Elijah, in the splendid furore of his soul, mocking them, and saying, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked;" and, in their fanaticism, they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets. Elijah's blood was up to fever heat, his whole soul was aroused, and he scoffed at and scorned those who could worship anything except the one true God. But what a time of excitement that must have been when he bade the people go and fetch water from the sea, and pour it on the bullock and the wood lying upon Jehovah's altar. When they had done as he bade them, he said, "Do it the second time;" and then, "Do it the third time;" and then, when the water ran round about the altar, and filled the trench as well, he prayed, and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know

that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

I suppose that Elijah had no trembling while the issue of the conflict was in suspense; I expect that he felt the utmost assurance that the fire would come down; but even that confidence must have been accompanied by a wonderful excitement of spirit while he stood gazing up into heaven, and crying to God to send the fire as his answering signal from the sky. I can imagine, too, the intense delight and the holy triumph of the prophet when it came; and I can conceive how the grand prophetic frenzy came upon him, making him to become both judge and executioner, as he exclaimed, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Then, when he had executed the stern vengeance of God upon them, he had to go up to the top of Carmel, and pray for the rain. That was another season of intense strain upon his mind; and when he had sent to Ahab the message, "Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not," the old prophet did what must have been very unusual for a man of his age and position, for he girded up his loins, and ran, like a footman, before the king, to prove his loyalty. So I do not wonder that, when the day's work was done, he was very weary; and when the news came that Jezebel had determined to put him to death, his heart sank within him. As he had risen high, so he fell low; as he had soared, he must descend. It seems to be the way with us all; we must pay the price for any joy that we experience; we cannot have great exhilaration without having some measure of depression afterwards. Do not condemn yourself if this is your lot; do not excuse yourself if there is any measure of unbelief mingled with your depression, but do not condemn yourself for what is really as natural a result as the retirement of the sea after its waves have kissed the cliff. It must be so; night must follow day, winter must succeed to summer; and joyful spirits, that rise aloft, must sink again. We may sometimes wish that we could always keep on the level ground where some of our dear friends live. I have often envied them, especially when I have been down in the dumps; but when I have again ascended to the heights, I have not envied them in the least. At such times, I would have pulled them up with me if it had been possible; but that I could not do. So, dear friend, you may depend upon it that you cannot be Elijah upon Carmel without the probability that you will be Elijah under a juniper bush before long. The great prophet of fire proves himself to be only a man, after all; and in the time of testing, you also will be as weak as other men.

Another reason for the prophet's depression was, no doubt, *his intense love to God, and his grievous disappointment with the people.* He had hoped that the test he had proposed would decide the great question. "If Jehovah be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." He had staked everything upon that one issue, "The

God that answereth by fire, let him be God;" and he had proved to a demonstration that Jehovah was God. Israel ought to have renewed her covenant, and to have returned to the God of her fathers there and then; but that wicked woman Jezebel had power over the people, and as long as she ruled the court, and the court ruled the nation, the cause of God could not come to the front. Elijah could not endure that; and I think that the heaviest sorrows to a really gracious heart are the sins of the times, the transgressions of the multitude, the national sins that bite like asps into an earnest soul, especially if you have done something, or have seen it done by others, which ought to have ended the discussion, and settled the matter once for all. Sometimes, when we have trusted in God, and he has wrought a great deliverance; and when this has been done before the eyes of men who, if it had not been wrought, would have denied God's existence or power, we have been disappointed to find that they did not candidly go the other way, and say, "Since God has done this, we are bound to admit that there is power in prayer, and that God's promises in the Scriptures are not a dead letter." No, my brethren, they would not be convinced, even though God should rend the azure sky, and put out his own right hand visibly before them; they would still say, "There is no God," and they would talk of the phenomenon which they had seen, and, no doubt, interpret it upon some natural or scientific principles so as to fritter the whole thing away. This kind of conduct eats into a godly man's spirit, and there is not much cause to wonder that he, who could say, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts," should find himself in such a state of heart that he steals right away into the wilderness, and never wants to see anybody again. Have you never sighed, as did the poet Cowper,—

> "For a lodge in some vast wilderness,
> Some boundless contiguity of shade;
> Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
> Of unsuccessful or successful war,
> Might never reach me more;"—

or have you never used the language of David, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest"?

There was, probably, another and a minor reason for Elijah's great depression, that is, *he was very weary*. I should suppose that he had gone a very long way, without resting at all; hot foot, in hasty flight from the cruel Jezebel, he had passed through a great part of the land both of Israel and Judah, and he had gone away alone into the wilderness, so he must have been very tired; and that, of itself, would tend to the lowering of his spirits. It is always a pity, when you are taking stock of yourself, not to consider the condition of the weather, the state of your stomach and liver, and a great many other things. Though they may seem small, yet there may be more in them than is apparent to the sight. I have known a man feel so bad that he thought he could not be a child of God; when, really, the main trouble was that he needed his dinner, for his spirits revived as soon as he had partaken of proper nourishment. Certainly, one of the lessons that this chapter teaches

us is, that when we get weary, or we suffer from some disease, so that the strength of our body begins to flag, then we are apt to say,—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought,—
> Do I love the Lord, or no?
> Am I his, or am I not?"

Now that kind of anxiety is right enough, but sometimes the cause of it lies in some small thing, altogether apart from spiritual forces, yet something which the devil can use to torment us very much. You know how Paul was tormented by Satan, once, in a way that was very painful and trying. It was not the devil himself who came to him, it was "the messenger of Satan,"—one of his errand boys; and he did not come to wound the apostle with a sword, he only came to "buffet" him, to hit him, as it were, with a gloved hand; and when he pierced him, it was only with "a thorn in the flesh;" yet that little thing bothered the apostle so much that he could not endure it, and he had to cry to God about it; he says, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." It often happens that some little thing like that, which really at another time we should altogether despise, may be the cause of intense depression of spirit. I know it is so, and I beseech God's children, however unusual the advice may seem, to attach some importance to it, or else they may begin condemning themselves when there is nothing to condemn, and be accusing themselves when really they are right with God, and all things are prospering with them. What terrible pain you may suffer from a little speck of dust in one of your eyes! You cannot see it, but you can feel it; and the tiniest stone in your shoe, how hard it makes your walking! And other little things will, often, as in the case of the prophet's weariness, cause grievous depression of spirit.

I must, however, point out to you that *Elijah's prayer that he might die, was a very foolish one.* Let us look at it a minute or two, and its folly will soon appear. He prayed that he might die: why? Because he was afraid that he should die! That is the odd thing about his request; he was running away from Jezebel, because she had threatened to kill him, yet he prayed that he might die! This was very inconsistent on his part, but we always are inconsistent when we are unbelieving. There is nothing in the world more really ridiculous than unbelieving fears. If we could but see them as we shall see them one day, when faith is strong, and we get into clearer light, we should laugh at ourselves, and then weep over ourselves to think that we should be so foolish. You run away from death, and then ask that you may die; that is what Elijah did, so it is no cause for wonder if poor ordinary mortals, such as we are, act in the same fashion as this great prophet of God did.

Further, it was great folly for him to wish to die, because there was more need, even according to his own account, that he should continue to live then than there ever had been before. What did he say? "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." But, Elijah, if you die, there will be an end of the Lord's

people, if your reckoning is correct. Surely, if you are the only one left, you ought to pray that you may live on until there are some more to carry on the work. It is a pity that the coal of Israel should be utterly quenched, and that the last lamp should be put out. The reason that the prophet gave for wanting to die was the very best reason he could have given for wanting to live. That is strange; but we are very strange creatures. There is not a man here who is not foolish at times; certainly, he who is in the pulpit takes precedence of you all in that respect; we all, some time or other, let out the folly that is in us; and we only need to be driven up into a corner, as Elijah was, and our folly will be discovered as was his; he ought to have prayed to live, yet he prayed that he might die.

Another thing that proves his folly is, that he never was to die at all, and he never did die; for he went up by a whirlwind into heaven. It is a remarkable fact that he who prayed that he might die is one of the two men who o'erleaped the ditch of death, and entered into life without dying. I wonder whether, as he rode to heaven in that chariot of fire, Elijah said to himself, "Why, I am the man who prayed that I might die!" If he did, he must have smiled with holy wonder that God did not take him at his word, and with sacred pleasure that his prayer was left unanswered. It was a petition that never ought to have been presented; and you and I, beloved, often have good reason to thank God that he does not answer our prayers, and we may sing, with quaint Ralph Erskine,—

> **"I'm heard when answer'd soon or late;**
> **And heard when I no answer get:**
> **Yea, kindly answer'd when refus'd,**
> **And friendly treat when harshly used."**

So was it with the prophet Elijah; God answered him by not answering him, because he had in store for him some better thing than he had asked.

Note, also, that *the reason Elijah gave for his prayer was an untrue one.* He said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." But it was not enough, he had not done enough for his Lord. He thought that he had; he imagined that he had gone to the very verge of his capacity. He had exalted God in the midst of the people, and put the whole nation to a crucial test, so he said, "It is enough; I can do no more." But he had a great deal more to do. He had to go down to Naboth's vineyard, and charge Ahab with the guilt of Naboth's death; he had to rebuke the idolatry of Ahaziah; and, above all, he had to call out his successor, who should keep the prophetic lamp still burning in the midst of Israel.

Elijah said, "It is enough," yet it was not enough even for his own enjoyment, for the Lord had more blessings in store for him; and you and I, beloved, have often felt that we have been, like Naphtali, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord;" yet the Lord has given us still richer favours and choicer blessings. It was so with Elijah, for he was to have that wonderful revelation of God on Mount Horeb. He had more to enjoy, and the

later life of Elijah appears to have been one of calm communion with his God; he seems never to have had another fainting fit, but to the end his sun shone brightly without a cloud. So it was not enough; how could he know that it was? It is God alone who knows when we have done enough, and enjoyed enough; but we do not know.

Elijah also said, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." But that was probably no more true than was the other reason that he gave for wishing to die. We do not know anything about his father, or any of his ancestors, but it is not likely that any one of them was at all comparable to him. Elijah was a grand man, a truly great man; God had favoured him far beyond his fathers, and intended still to do so. He was a man who walked altogether on a higher path than the rest of his fellows; and while it was well for him to be humble, it was not well for him to be so humble as to forget the great things that God had done for him.

Come, then, my dear brother or sister, if you are sitting under your juniper tree, and saying, "Let me die, for it is enough;" correct your foolish request, examine the reason that suggests it, and you will find it too weak to justify such a desire; so, may God help you to abandon it at once!

II. Now, in the second place, it is a very pleasing task to speak for a few minutes upon GOD'S TENDERNESS TO ELIJAH IN THIS TIME OF WEAKNESS.

It is always well for ministers, and all who have the care of souls, to watch how God deals with those who are in trouble, just as a young surgeon, when he walks the hospital, is eager to see how a master in the healing art treats his patients. The first thing that God did with Elijah was a very simple thing, *he let him sleep.* There is the poor prophet down in the dumps; he wants to die, but the Lord lets him sleep instead; and he slept soundly, too, for he needed an angel to wake him, and soon he fell asleep again, and a second time he had to be awakened. Rest was the one thing that he most needed, so, by—

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"—

God gave his servant rest. Some people do not seem to think that the Lord's servants need any rest; they want us to be always at work, fulfilling this engagement and that; but this is the way to bring us quickly to our graves. Yet we do not serve a hard Master; his Church is often thoughtless and unkind, but he never is, so he gave his servant Elijah the sleep that he most of all needed just then.

What was the next thing that God did? It seems a very small matter, yet it was the best thing he could do for Elijah; that is, *the Lord fed him.* When the angel awakened him, "he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." Now, I am afraid that, if you and I had been there, we should have begun talking to Elijah, and have worried the poor man by telling him how wrongly he had been acting. Instead of doing that, the angel let him have a cake, and then let him go to sleep again. That

was the best way of caring for him; and there is many a hungry and weary child of God who needs food and rest more than anything else. The spirit needs to be fed, and the body needs feeding also. Do not forget these matters; it may seem to some people that I ought not to mention such small things as food and rest, but these may be the very first elements in really helping a poor depressed servant of God. It is not surprising that God becomes Cake-maker to his children, for we know that he is their Bed-maker. David said, concerning the man who considers the poor, "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." There is nothing that is really necessary or beneficial which God will not do for his children. If they serve him so zealously that they get knocked up in his service, he will care for them, and bring them round again, for he knows how to do it; and very likely, like Elijah, they shall have their sleep first, and then their cake.

The next comfort that Elijah had was, *blessed nursing*. He had an angelic visitor to keep him company. The angel came to him, and delivered the Lord's message, "Arise: eat." He only uttered two words, but two words from an angel are better than a great many from some other persons. "Arise: eat." That was God's message to Elijah; and, beloved, it is very sweet when God lets his servants know that his angels are round about them, encompassing them, taking care of them, as when Jacob was met at Mahanaim by the host of God, and was comforted before he met his brother Esau. And many weary ones still find that God's angelic messengers are round about them, so that they should not be left alone in the time of their trial.

The next thing that God did for Elijah, after he had allowed him to finish his journey, and get to Horeb, was that *he permitted him to tell his grief*. You may have noticed that he told the story twice; he knew what he was grieving about, so he stated it very definitely; and the Lord allowed him to tell it. It is often a wonderful relief to be able to tell out your grief, to pull up the sluices, and let the waters of sorrow run away. If no one but God shall hear it, if no human ear should listen to thy complaining, yet it is a very sweet thing to unburden your heart. One hymn-writer says,—

> **"Bear and forbear, and silent be;**
> **Tell no man thy misery;"—**

but I am not sure about the wisdom of that advice. At any rate, tell it to God, for he suffered his poor servant Elijah to pour out into his ear the sad tale of his woe.

This done, the Lord helped to restore his servant *by revealing himself, and revealing his ways to him*. He made Elijah see that God is not so apparent in terrific agencies as in quieter forms, that he does not always accomplish his purposes by earthquake and fire. The Lord let him see that "a still small voice" was being heard throughout Israel, although the prophet thought that no good had come of his testimony; and thus he was cheered.

Next, *the Lord gave him good news*. He told Elijah that he still

had seven thousand in Israel, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and that revelation still further cheered the prophet's heart. Then the Lord did what perhaps was best of all for Elijah, *he gave him some more work to do.* He sent him off about his Master's business again; and I warrant you that, when Elijah went back over that road, it was with a very different step from that which brought him down to Beer-sheba. He had come along terrified and distressed; but now he goes back with the majesty that belongs to the Tishbite, he is afraid of no Jezebel now. He calls out Elisha to be his successor, and he denounces Ahab, and does it bravely and boldly, and no one hears of his wanting to hide away again. God had brought his servant up out of his depression, in the way I have described, and he never went back again to that sad condition.

Now I come to the practical conclusion of the matter, which is this. Let us learn, from Elijah's experience, first, that it is very seldom right for us to pray that we may die. It was not right for Elijah, and it is very seldom right for anybody to do so. It is never right for any of you, whose death would be your eternal ruin, to wish to die. Perhaps I am addressing some unconverted people who, in their impatience against God, have wished to die. What would you have gained by death? That day would be all darkness and not light to you; it would devour you as stubble. For any man to lay violent hands on himself in order to escape from trouble, is the maddest of all actions; it is leaping into the fire to escape the sparks; casting yourself into hell in order to avoid some temporary depression of spirit. Oh, if you are ever tempted in that way, God grant you grace at once to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Even if you feel a desire to die in order to get out of this world of misery, crush it down. If you are an unconverted man, whatever the misery of this world is, it is nothing compared with the misery of the world to come. It is far better to bear the ills you have than to fly to others that you know not of; even common sense should teach you that.

As for the man of God, it is seldom, if ever, that he should get into such a state of heart as to wish for death. I know, beloved, that we may sometimes very properly desire death; when we have had a more than usually clear sight of Christ, we have longed to be with him. May not the bride desire to be perpetually in the Bridegroom's company? When sacred song has sometimes carried us, on its bright wings of silver, up into the clear atmosphere that is round about the gates of heaven, we have wished to enter; we have longed that we might see our God. I have no doubt it is right enough, when we are wearied, to wish for the everlasting rest; when we are conscious of sin, it is right enough to wish to be where sin can never come, and temptation can never more annoy. There must be such wishes; there must be such aspirations; for, to depart, and to be with Christ, is far better than to abide here; but we must never get into such a craving and longing for heaven that we are not content to bide our time here. We do not like men, who work for us, to be always looking for Saturday night to come; and there are some Christians who are always wanting their Saturday night to arrive.

Be willing to do a good day's work, to do a good week's work; and then the Sabbath will be all the sweeter to you when you get up—

> "Where congregations ne'er break up,
> And Sabbaths have no end."

How long you and I are to be here, is no concern of ours. After all, we are not our own masters; we are our Lord's servants. If he thinks we can glorify him better here than there, it must be our choice to remain here. I remember a good woman, to whom the question was put, when she was very sick, and very full of pain, "Do you wish to die or to live?" She answered, "I wish to have no wish about the matter, but to leave it in the hands of God." "But suppose the Lord Jesus Christ were to say to you, 'You are to have whichever you wish,' what would you choose?" She said, "I would ask him to decide for me, but I would not like to have my choice." You see, if we were dying, and we said, "This is our own choice," we should lack some comfort which we might otherwise have had; but when we feel, "It was no choice of ours, it was the choice of God that we should die," then it is sweet; and if you live, you can say, "I am not living now in answer to an impatient cry of mine; I am living because God willed it, and there is a purpose to be served by it," and then it is sweet to live. So leave the matter alone, dear friend, and let the Lord do as he wills with you. Elijah wished to die, and prayed an unwise prayer; but our blessed Master said to his Father, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and in all the throes of his death-agony, there was not a syllable of impatience, but a perfect resignation to the will of God. That is the first practical lesson.

And the second is, that whenever we do wish to die, we must take care that it is from the very best of motives, and that there is no selfishness in it,—no wish to escape from suffering, or from service; but we must wish to depart to be with Christ because it is far better.

> "Let me be with thee where thou art,
> My Saviour, my eternal rest!
> Then only will this longing heart
> Be fully and for ever blest."

And, lastly, there is one more practical lesson for us to learn that is, you and I have not the slightest idea of what is in store for us on earth. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" up yonder; and you do not know what he has prepared for you even here. Elijah says, "Let me die." But, Elijah, would you not like to live to veil your face in the presence of God on Horeb? "Oh, yes!" he would say, "let me live till then." And, Elijah, would you not like to live to rebuke Ahab for his sin against Naboth? "Oh, yes! I should like to live till then." Would you not like to live till you have cast your mantle over that blessed servant of God, Elisha, who is to succeed you? "Oh, yes!" he would say, "let me live till then." And would you not like to live, Elijah, till you have seen the schools of the prophets, raised

by your influence, which shall live, after both you and Elisha are gone, to keep alive the work of God? I think I hear the old man say, "Oh, yes! let me live till then. Happy shall I be if I can see schools instituted for the training of ministers who shall go and preach in God's name. Yes, let me live till then." And you do not know, brother, how much there is for you yet to live for; and you, my sister, do not talk about dying, for you also have a great deal more to do before you get to heaven, service for your Saviour that will make heaven all the better when you get there. God has such blessings in store for some of you that, when they come to you, you will be like men that dream; and your mouth shall be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing, and you will say, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Wherefore, be of good courage, and strengthen your hearts, and wait still upon the Lord until he cometh; and may his blessing be with you for ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 686, 116 (Song I).

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FOURFOLD SATISFACTION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 12TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 4th, 1880.

"And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD. . . . For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul."—Jeremiah xxxi. 14, 25.

THE subject of this morning* was spiritual thirst, and the promises made thereto. I tried to encourage those who are not at rest concerning the state of their souls,—those who have strong and ardent desires to escape from the wrath to come,—I tried to encourage them to partake of Christ, by faith, that they might find peace of heart, and so might be perfectly satisfied. I believe that some did find peace this morning. We shall be on the look-out for them, and hope that they will speedily come, and tell us what God has done for their souls.

But, on this occasion, our subject is the very opposite of that of this morning. It is neither thirst nor hunger, but perfect satisfaction, not strength of agonizing desire, but rest of holy satiety of which I am about to speak, in the earnest hope that all of you, who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, may enjoy this perfect satisfaction even at this very hour. There are four forms of satisfaction described in the four sentences of the two verses which form our text.

I. The first is, GOD'S SERVANTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE APPOINTED SACRIFICE. Read the first sentence of verse 14: "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness."

God's people are his children, but they are also his servants; and their service, viewed from one special point, is that of priests. Christ has made all of us, who believe in him, to be kings and priests unto our God. It is the business of every Christian man to be a priest. There is no special order of priests now, apart from the general body of believers in Christ. We regard the use of the term "priests" as relating to any other persons as utterly misleading and untrue. Every man, who is a Christian, is a priest unto

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,549, "Good News for Thirsty Souls."

God, and he daily offers unto God the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. In fact, his whole life should be a sacrifice; his ordinary garments should be his priestly vestments; and wherever he is, the place should be a temple for God's worship. His own house, and every room in it, should be consecrated to the Lord's service; and every action of his life should be the act of one who is holy unto the Lord, and who does everything with a view to the glory of God.

Priests, of course, must have a sacrifice, and it is the special privilege of the priests of God that they shall be satisfied by eating the fat of that sacrifice. If you read, when you are at home, in the 7th chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will find that the Aaronic priests were forbidden to eat the fat of the sacrifice; and, in fact, to eat any portion of the fat of a beast that had been sacrificed to God, was a crime that was punishable with death. There were certain portions of the sacrificial animals that were allotted to the priests; but all that was described as "the fat thereof" was for God, and for God alone; so that, under the Jewish dispensation, the priest could never be satisfied with fatness. But Christ has made us priests after another order than that of Aaron, and the richest part of the sacrifice, the very fat of it, is ours to feed upon now.

Dear brethren, what is the sacrifice, of which we speak to-day, but the Lord Jesus Christ? We know of no other atoning sacrifice but the blessed person, body, soul, spirit, and blood of Jesus Christ, our incarnate God and Saviour. It is with this sacrifice that believers are perfectly satisfied.

First, *we are satisfied with Christ as our sin-offering.* Brethren, he did really take upon himself our sin, and he did make an end of it upon the cross. Believing in Christ Jesus, we have no more consciousness of sin so far as its guilt is concerned. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. When Christ took our sins, we had not one of them left. We were clear of them, in God's sight, the moment that Christ became our Substitute; and when, by faith, we laid our hand on that dear head of his, and made confession of our transgression, we received the personal assurance that our sin was made to meet upon him more than eighteen hundred years ago. When he was nailed to the accursed tree, without the gate, he presented a sin-offering for our sake, and that one offering was effectual, for by it he has fulfilled the great prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Brethren, you believe this great truth, I know you do; but are you satisfied with it? If you are not, you ought to be; for what better fount of cleansing can you desire than the precious blood of Christ? What better way of atonement do you want than that Christ should bear the wrath of God for you,—that he should take your sin, and hurl it into the depths of the sea where it can never be found again? When he had done this, he cried, "It is finished;" and it was finished for ever, so are you not perfectly satisfied with Christ as your sin-offering?

Next, *we are satisfied with Christ as our burnt-offering.* Under that aspect also, he was well pleasing to God. Man was bound to bring to God a perfect obedience which should please his Maker; by himself, man could never do this; but Christ has done it, and you and I who believe in him are perfectly satisfied that God is well pleased with him, and also well pleased with us who are representatively in him. By faith, wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, with his finished work imputed to us, and his perfect robe covering us as with raiment of wrought gold, we do believe that we are beautiful in the sight of God, "accepted in the Beloved," so that he can use his words to the spouse in the Canticles, and say to us, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." If you believe this, and have really a firm grip of it, you are perfectly satisfied with Christ as your justifying righteousness, the burnt-offering with which God is well pleased so that he smelleth in it a savour of rest.

There was another offering, called the peace-offering, in which the worshipper partook with God of the sacrifice in token of complete reconciliation between God and the sinner. Are you not *perfectly satisfied with Christ as your peace-offering?* You feed upon him, and God feeds upon him; and, therefore, you feel yourself to be at perfect peace with God, do you not? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have you that peace, beloved? If you are looking to Christ alone as your Saviour, I know that you do feel within you that deep "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which doth "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Do you want any better peace with God than Christ has made? Do you want any better reconciliation than Christ has accomplished? I know you do not; and you can, at this moment, from your inmost soul say, "God has satisfied my soul with the sacrifice of his dear Son. The fatness of that sacrifice has filled me, and I am delighted with it. Christ has put away all my sin; he has made me acceptable unto God; he has given me the enjoyment of peace with God and communion with him. Now am I fully contented."

Dear brothers and sisters, when a man truly lays hold of Christ, he gets fully satisfied. People come to us, and say, "Why don't you take up the modern-thought doctrines? Why don't you study the new theories that so many have accepted?" Well, the reason is that, when we have the best object for our faith that we ever can get, we feel as if that was quite good enough for us. We cannot imagine anything that could give such rest to our entire nature as a belief in Christ has done. If you can really prove to us that there is something better, we are not fools, and we shall be quite willing to accept it; but we greatly question whether you ever will bring us to your way of thinking, for this Christ of ours, in whom we have believed, is so good, and great, and gracious, and glorious, that he fills and overfills us, and we do not see what more we could ever want or have.

Oh! how long was my mind in bitter anguish till I came to eat the fat of Christ's sacrifice; and when I trusted in him as my

Substitute, he at once satisfied the demands of my intellect. I seemed to think that it was the most glorious invention possible even to God that Christ should die, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Then I understood how God could be justified, and yet be the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; —how he could pardon me, and yet punish my sin;—how there should be no violation of his justice, and yet no limitation of his mercy, because Christ stepped in, and paid all my debt, so that it was justly as well as mercifully struck out from the record of God. There are some very great intellects in the world, no doubt there are much greater ones than mine; but, as far as mine is concerned, that doctrine of Christ's substitution perfectly satisfies me.

Words fail me when I try to tell you how fully this truth also satisfies my conscience. My conscience, burdened, troubled, and perplexed when it was once aroused, used to plague me day and night. I said to myself, "If God does not punish me for my sins, he ought to do so." I could not believe in any love of God that did not punish my sin; but when I saw that he bade his sword awake against his own dear Son who stood in my stead,—when I saw that he was too just to wink at sin, and pass by transgression, but visited it upon a willing Substitute,—blessed be his name, then my conscience found a place of perfect rest. I felt that I could love God, and trust God, because he had not winked at sin, but had punished it, in the person of his dear Son, on my behalf. Oh, this fat of the sacrifice satisfies God's servants as to their conscience!

And now it also satisfies my affections; and it will satisfy yours, dear friend, if you trust to it. You want somebody to love; everybody does. You cannot go through the world, simply living inside your own ribs. You must live in somebody's heart; and if you give your heart altogether to any human being, you will be disappointed. But, oh! when you love Christ with all your heart, when you live wholly for him, then you have something that fills your heart right up. Here your love can rest; it can roost and build its nest in the wounds of Jesus. There is nothing that can fill the affections of any one of us like the dear person of our suffering Lord.

And I am sure that he also satisfies all our hopes. Large as they may be, there is enough in Christ fully to gratify them; and as for our fears, he fills them up so that we seem to have nothing to fear. "If God be for us," in Christ, "who can be against us?" If Christ has died for us, who is he that condemneth us; and what is there that can now separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Oh, if you would all but try this blessed plan of believing in Jesus as the Lamb of God slain for your sin; if you would but eat the fat of this great sacrifice, you also would prove the truth of the first sentence of our text, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness." In that way, you would have all you could take in, and a great deal more than all you want.

II. Now let us turn to the second sentence of our text: "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." This teaches us that, AS GOD'S PEOPLE, WE ARE SATISFIED WITH GOD'S GOODNESS. All through my discourse, I shall be appealing to you,

dear friends, and asking you whether it is not as I say. Come now, beloved, you who are the Lord's people, I want to ask you a few questions concerning his goodness to you.

First, *are you satisfied with God's eternal purposes?* Your names are written in his book of life, he chose you from eternity to be his. Before the torch of light had kindled the first shining orb, he had looked upon you with prescient eye, and loved you. You are satisfied about that great truth, I hope: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "Satisfied?" did I say? That word seems scarcely good enough. Sit down, and turn over in your mind this eternal love of God, and you will feel such delight within your soul, if you feel as I do, that you will soon have the tears streaming down your cheeks for very joy as you sing,—

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn:
Chosen of thee ere time began,
I choose thee in return."

Well, now, out of that eternal love comes *adoption into God's family*. Taking us out of the family of the prince of darkness, he has made us his own sons and daughters. Are you satisfied with that adoption? Do you want any higher honour than to be a child of God? For, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Earthly sovereigns are accustomed to confer titles of nobility upon certain of their subjects; I suppose there is something in the honour, though not much; but when God makes a man his child, he puts him among the princes of the blood royal of heaven, the imperial family of the skies. The peerages of heaven are so glorious that all the nobilities of earth sink into utter insignificance in comparison with them. You, poor man, and you, humble woman, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, are allied to the God that made heaven and earth; you have been admitted distinctly into the one divinely royal family of the universe; are you not satisfied with this honour? You should be, indeed, more than satisfied with this goodness of the Lord.

Well, now, since you have become the subject of this adoption, *all God's dealings with you have been the dealings of a father*. He treats you now as his sons. Perhaps, at the present moment, you do not feel quite satisfied with God's dealings with you; but if you are in a right spirit, you will be. It may be that God has stripped you of your wealth, and pulled you down from the high places you once occupied; you now stand in a very lowly position compared with that which you once filled. Yet, beloved, if faith be in active exercise, you will say concerning the Lord's dealings with you, "What pleases him, pleases me. Whether he lifts me up, or casts me down, since he does it out of fatherly love, and makes all things work for my good, I will be satisfied with whatever he does, for it is all goodness, and it is written, 'My people shall be satisfied with my goodness.'" O dear friends, this is a happy state of mind to be in, to be content with all that happens to us,—to have done with wishing for any alteration in God's dealings with us,—to be satisfied with whatever he gives, and just as satisfied when he withholds,—to

be even as a weaned child, crying no more after this poor world, but giving yourself up entirely to your loving Father's care! May God grant to each one of you this privilege of being perfectly satisfied with his providential dealings with you! You will be a very naughty child if you are not; and you will bring upon yourself a heap of trouble if you kick against what God has done. It will cost you more pain to rebel against God's will than that will ever can cause you if you yield to it.

Are you not also *satisfied with the goodness of God in his promises?* Take your Bible; is it not a galaxy of stars,—every one of them infinitely more precious than the whole of the wealth of this world? All that you need for time and for eternity is included in the promises of God's Word.

"What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

I am quite sure that you are also *satisfied with your prospects.* Why, methinks, that you will each one say, "I am infinitely more than satisfied with the prospect before me; it is too bright, too good, too glorious." I am sure that God's people, when they are in a right state of heart, are so satisfied with his goodness that they do not wish for anything more. They can hardly conceive of more than God has prepared for them that love him. Let me but have God's goodness, and all may be as God wills. Only grant me thy favour, O my God, and I will make no choice of continent or climate, of poverty or wealth, of sickness or health, of time to live or time to die. If I have thy goodness, all else is but a trifle. God's people show that they are satisfied with God's goodness for they have no wish to change it for anything else. They would not give up their God if all the kingdoms of the world could be delivered over to them; they do not desire anything better for their children than God's goodness. When you, who are parents, think of your dear ones growing up around you, you are naturally anxious about their prospects. If you did but know that they were all the Lord's children, you would say, "We really care for nothing more than that; their fortune is made when once their father's God has become their God."

This spirit of resignation makes you content to wait here below, whether it be threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, or less, or more. That question will not trouble you so long as God's goodness follows you. And this satisfaction also makes you happy in the thought of departure out of this world;—not impatient, but still expectant, hoping for the day soon to come when, borne on wings sublime, you shall leave behind you all the fret and care of this poor undeveloped life, and shall enter into the glory where your spirit shall expand itself in the full light of God, and you shall know what God has prepared for them that love him.

III. I can only speak very briefly upon the third sentence of our text, which is found in the 25th verse: "I have satiated the weary soul." THIS SATISFACTION IS MEANT FOR WEARY PILGRIMS.

First, *they are to be satisfied with divine refreshments.* Was it not so with you, beloved, when you started on the heavenly pilgrimage?

I should like to recall to you, my brothers and sisters, that memorable day when first you knew the Lord. In my own case, I can testify that I was very heavy of heart and very weary in spirit. Often did Satan tempt me to give up seeking rest, for I had sought so long in vain. I had attended the ordinances of God's house, and used the means of grace with great diligence; yet I think I was none the better, but rather grew worse. But the moment that I looked to Christ upon the cross, the very instant I understood that all I had to do was to look unto him, and be saved, truly he had satiated my weary soul. I could have danced for joy, or shouted "Hallelujah!" at that moment; and by the hour together my spirit was singing, "Praise the Lord!" I did not know how to express my delight sufficiently. You recollect that time yourselves, do you not, when the Lord satiated your weary soul? He had given you all that your soul could feed upon, and a great deal more. You were like a mouse that gets into a dairy full of cheese; you knew that you could not eat it all, you seemed to bury yourself in the fatness and fulness of the Lord's mercy. There was no hope that you would be able to take it all in. It was so with me, I know; I felt like a little fish in the Atlantic, swimming where I pleased; above, beneath, around on all sides, there was an infinity of delight that much more than filled my soul. That is what the Lord does for us when we begin to trust in Jesus. How has it been with us since then?

Well, brethren, I for one testify that *he has continued to revive us.* We have often been weary since those early days; sometimes, weary in the Lord's service, though never weary of it. We have been wearied with pain; we have been wearied with trials; we have been wearied with doubts and fears; we have been wearied with the assaults of Satan; we have been wearied with the unkindness of men; and weary in a great many ways; but, oh! whenever we have come to Christ, how speedily he has satiated our weary soul! We could laugh at opposition then; we could cheerfully take up our heaviest cross, and find it light as a feather; and we marched onward singing—

> "In darkest shades if he appear,
> My dawning is begun;
> He is my soul's sweet morning star,
> And he my rising sun."

Perhaps our greatest weariness is weariness of ourselves. The one person that troubles me most is the one from whom I cannot get away as long as I am here. There is, I expect, a troublesome fellow who worries and bothers you a great deal; that is, your own self. Well, dear friend, when you are weary of self, you will find it a blessed thing just to look away to Christ, and to say, "Lord, I am empty, but thou art my fulness; I am weakness itself, but thou art my strength; I am a mass of sin and misery, but thou art my righteousness and my salvation; I am less than nothing, but thou art all in all to me." It is when we are most sick of self that we are most fond of our Saviour, and it is when we get most weary of

sinning that we find the sweetest repose in our sin-conquering Redeemer.

So, you see, there is perfect satisfaction for weary souls, and well there may be, for look, ye weary ones, and see what you have to give you this satisfaction. God the Father is yours, to be your Father; God the Son is yours, to be your Husband, your Head; God the Holy Ghost is yours, to be your Comforter, your perpetual Indweller. "All things are yours; . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The covenant, in which the "all things" are wrapped up, is yours, for he hath made with you "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Heaven is yours, with its golden streets, its green inviting fields, its endless glories, its boundless bliss, all is yours. Are you not satisfied, O poor weary one? Throw thyself down upon the couch of God's goodness, and take thy fill of rest, for this is the rest, and this is the refreshing, and "so he giveth his beloved sleep."

IV. The last sentence of our text can only just be touched upon; it speaks of SATISFACTION FOR MOURNERS: "I have replenished every sorrowful soul."

There are plenty of sorrowful souls about, and no doubt there are many in this congregation. As we look into their faces, they appear tolerably cheerful; but "the heart knoweth his own bitterness." There are some of us who are, at times, very heavy of heart; but when we do wear sackcloth, we always wear it next our skin. I can speak for myself upon that matter; I do not like to wear sackcloth outside, for everybody to see, because, if we do that, we make other people wear it, too, for we set a fashion of mourning, and this is our Lord's command: "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

But, now, where are you, sorrowful ones? Here is satisfaction for you, whatever may be the cause of your weeping and grieving. *Are you sorrowing about past sin?* Well, the Lord has given you perfect satisfaction concerning that matter, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he tells you that he has put away all your iniquity: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy trangressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You need not be downcast concerning the sins that God tells you have ceased to be. Remember that wonderful declaration in Jeremiah l. 20: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Perhaps you are *sorrowful about inbred sin.* You grieve because you cannot live as you would like to live. That is a blessed kind

of sorrow; all God's servants have to fight with inward corruption, more or less, and it often makes us cry, with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But do not stop at that question; go on to say with Paul, on another occasion, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Your inward sins will be all conquered. There is not one Canaanite in the land who will not be destroyed by the power of your glorious Joshua, Jesus, who is leading you on to the battle. You shall be perfect one day; before the presence of God, with exceeding joy, you shall be presented, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Perhaps, however, some of you may be *sorrowing because of your present troubles.* Then the Lord comforts you by telling you that your troubles are working for your lasting good. I should like to bear my own witness to the Lord's goodness to me, and I desire to bless him as much for the cups full of bitterness as for the chalices of sweet delight; and I really and honestly believe that, of the two, I have gained more by affliction than by joy; and I have more reason to praise God, at this moment, for deep depression and heart sorrow than for all the joys I have ever known, with but one exception, that is, the joy of believing in Christ, and having fellowship with him. Put all earthly enjoyments together, and I do not think that they are worthy to be compared with the benefit of sanctified sorrow.

There may be some of you who are *sorrowing because of dear children whom you have lost.* The text says, "I have replenished every sorrowful soul;" so that you must not sorrow over these dear ones who have died, especially after you have read in this chapter about God comforting Rachel concerning her slain children. You know how the innocents were murdered at Bethlehem by the cruel Herod, and Rachel mourned for them in this prophetic lamentation; but the Lord said to her, "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." It is a high honour to be the mother of a child in heaven; it is something still higher to be mother to many sweet little ones who have gone on before you, and who are singing up there an everlasting song of praise unto the King. It is a wondrous joy to be the father of those who, day and night, wait upon God in heaven, and see his face, and serve him evermore; so be not sad or downcast if that is your case. As for all who die in the Lord, we sorrow not as those who are without hope. There will be blessed meetings by-and-by. You look back, with great sorrow, to the loss of a dear husband, wife, brother, sister, father, mother; yes, but you know where they are, and you have the blessed assurance that you shall meet them again in the day when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and you with them shall form an unbroken family around the throne of God in heaven.

What is your sorrow, dear friend? I will not stop to go into any further particulars; but whatsoever it may be, there is grace stored up in Christ sufficient to take all your sorrow away. Come, aching head, lay thyself down upon the bosom of the loving Jesus. Come, weary heart, lean thy whole weight upon his wounded side. Come,

child of God with the sad countenance, and the red eyes of sorrow, look to the Man of sorrows, grief's close acquaintance, and learn from him where the river of salvation perpetually flows. If the Lord will but reveal himself to you, you will want no other consolation, for he is himself the Consolation of Israel. Some of you may not come to this place many times more perhaps; you are getting old now, and very feeble. Well, suppose you never come again, we shall be sorry to miss you if we ourselves remain, but you will not be sorry to be "for ever with the Lord." You are going from good to better, and from better to best; and what will the best be? If, at the Lord's table down here, you have sometimes had such raptures that you hardly knew how to bear the joy,—and I know that you have had such bliss,—what will it be to see your Saviour face to face, and to be for ever with him where you can never grieve him again, and where he will pour out all the love that is in his heart into your glorified spirit? All that may happen to you within a week, within an hour, within a moment. Nobody knows how near we are to the King's pearly gate, so let us not sorrow too much, nor be too much cast down. Hark to the music of the golden harps; they are ringing out so sweetly that, if we could but open these ears of ours a little more, we might catch at least some stray notes from the everlasting harmonies. Some of you are nearer to heaven than you think you are. If these eyes could but be opened, or be taken away altogether, so that the spirit might see without the hindrance of these poor dim glasses, what a sight it would be! The jewelled city, with its twelve foundations all formed of precious stones, and the eternal light shining out of it from the face of God and the Lamb, for no other light is needed there.

"What must it be to be there?"

Just think that we may be there within the next ten minutes; and this thought should make us bear without a sigh the sorrows of the present moment, whatever they may be.

"The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,"

so let us—

"Smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song;"—

and God be with us evermore, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH XXXI. 1—26.

Verses 1—3. *At the same time, saith the* LORD, *will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the* LORD, *The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The* LORD *hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*

Was there ever a sweeter word from heaven than this,—everlasting love proved by the drawings of divine grace? I know that your hearts will

be full of music if ever the Spirit of God has spoken home to your soul such a message as this. Let us read it again. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

4, 5. *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.*

God has kind purposes of love towards his ancient people, and he will yet bring Israel again to her own land. And, spiritually, he has like purposes of love to all his elect; and they shall joy and rejoice with unspeakable delight. What though you are barren for a while? God shall yet come to you, and you shall be fruitful.

6—9. *For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the* LORD *our God. For thus saith the* LORD; *Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O* LORD, *save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

Do not forget the first meaning of this passage in its reference to Israel, but suck in also the consolation which comes from it to all who are believers in Christ. The Lord will certainly bring all his chosen ones to himself. Blind as they are,—wandering as they have been,—they shall come back to him; they shall come back with tears of repentance, and with refreshments of mercy: "by the rivers of water." They shall come back to their God, who says, "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

10, 11. *Hear the word of the* LORD, *O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the* LORD *hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.*

Redemption lies at the bottom of every favour that we receive from God. He blesses us because he has redeemed us. He has bought us with so great a price that we are too dear for him ever to lose us. Because he has bought his flock, therefore will he fetch it away from the enemy.

12—14. *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the* LORD, *for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the* LORD.

Why, these very words are full of marrow and fatness! The promise is inexpressibly sweet; what must the fulfilment of it be? Oh, for faith to lay hold upon it!

Yet there is a note of sorrow mingled with the pealing of the joy-bells:—

15, 16. *Thus saith the* LORD; *A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the* LORD; *Refrain thy voice*

from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; *and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.*

"Your lost babes shall live; their very bodies, mouldering in the earth, shall rise again. Be not grieved or vexed overmuch; for 'they shall come again from the land of the enemy.'"

17. *And there is hope in thine end, saith the* LORD, *that thy children shall come again to their own border.*

There is another sorrow,—a deeper sorrow than grief over children, that is, sorrow for sin:—

18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,—*

And there was an end of it,—

18. *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:*

Since thy chastisements have been of little service to me, lay thine hand upon me:—

18, 19. *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the* LORD *my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented;*

Repentance is a turning from sin unto the Lord.

19. *And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh:*

In very grief of heart, as if I could not smite myself enough for having sinned.

19. *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Now when a man talks like that, how does God speak?

20. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still:*

"Not only do I remember him, but 'I do earnestly remember him still.'"

20. *Therefore my bowels are troubled for him;*

"I cannot bear to see his misery."

20. *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the* LORD.

Oh, what blessedness there is in this gracious promise!

21—26. *Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the* LORD *hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the* LORD *of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The* LORD *bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

I should think it was. If a man could dream like that, he might well wish to go to sleep again. To dream of everlasting love, of gracious drawings, of heavenly restorations, of sin forgiven, sorrow removed, and desire satisfied, well may the prophet say, "My sleep was sweet unto me." May we, when we are awake, learn what the prophet heard in his sleep!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—774, 801, 746.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BITTER HERBS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 19TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 25th, 1880.

"With bitter herbs they shall eat it."—Exodus xii. 8.

PERHAPS, before I come to the consideration of this sentence, it may be profitable, especially to the younger folk amongst us, if we think of the many points in which the passover was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;" and hence he informs us, by inspiration,—and therefore it is not a matter of conjecture or fancy,—that the passover was instituted to be a type of Jesus Christ who is the Lamb of God, the one appointed sacrifice for the sins of all his people.

In our reading, we have already noticed that great care was to be taken in the selection of the paschal lamb. It was to be without blemish, even as Jesus Christ, our Saviour, had no sin in him. The prince of this world watched him narrowly, but he found nothing of evil in him; all his enemies, as well as his friends, agreed that he was without fault. The paschal lamb was to be in the fulness of its strength, "a male of the first year;" even as our Lord Jesus Christ was offered as a sacrifice in the fulness of his manhood. He was perfect both as God and man, and hence was fit to become the sacrifice for the sins of men. Admire and adore your perfect Saviour, who, though he had no sin of his own, took upon himself your sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The most important parts of the passover celebration were the killing of the lamb, and the sprinkling of the side posts of the door and the lintel with its blood. That was the ordained method by which the safety of those who dwelt within the house was secured. God looked with angry eye on Egypt, and bade his destroying angel avenge him of his adversaries. "At midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon." There was no exception; every house was filled with

lamentation, except where the blood-mark was over and beside the door. The angel passed over that house, smiting none there; and we are expressly told that it was God's sight of the sprinkled blood by which the firstborn in Israel were preserved from destruction. This is the main type of Christ's atonement. Christ Jesus died as the Substitute for all who believe in him; and because he bore the punishment of sin for them, God righteously withholds it from them. How could he twice demand payment of sin's debt, first at the bleeding Surety's hand, and then again at the hand of those for whom he stood as Surety? Christ is the Substitute for all his elect; his elect are all those who believe in him; and by this sign ye may know them, they are sheltering beneath his sprinkled blood; and when God sees the blood, he passes over them. So, let each one of us ask himself, "Am I hiding behind the blood of Jesus? Is my confidence entirely fixed in the great reconciliation and propitiation which Christ has made? If so, I shall live; no destroyer can ever smite me; God himself must pass over me in the day of judgment, and I shall be 'accepted in the Beloved.'"

There was in Egypt, that night, a saved Israel;—saved because of the blood sprinkled outside their houses;—and I hope we have here many members of a saved nation,—saved not because of anything they are or ever will be in themselves, but because Jesus has suffered in their stead, and his blood interposes between God and them.

After this, followed the feeding upon the lamb; the lamb, which had been slain, was to be roasted and eaten; and you who are saved by Christ's death must continue to live upon Christ, as he said to the Jews, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This is, of course, a figure, meaning that Christ must be food to your minds, and nutriment to your hearts. You must love him, and trust him, and endeavour to know more and more concerning him. Your hearts must stay themselves upon him as your Brother, having taken your nature; and as your Saviour, having put away your sin.

This feeding upon the lamb was to be upon a roasted lamb,—not raw, nor sodden, "but roast with fire." Christ is food for our hearts as having suffered for us,—as having passed through the fire of God's wrath against sin. I do rejoice in Christ as he is now exalted at the right hand of the Father; but, first of all, I must know him as despised and rejected of men. Christ's second advent is proper and lawful ground for joy, but not until you understand his first advent, and see him in his humiliation on Calvary. Christ on the cross is to be the one object of your faith; you must look to him there even as the Israelite was to look upon and feed upon the lamb roasted in the fire. Think what Christ has endured for you, beloved. I tried, this morning,* to speak about his griefs; but I know that I failed to set them forth at all adequately. Oh, what a fire was that through which our Lord Jesus Christ passed that he might become food for our souls!

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* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,550, "The Gift Unspeakable."

Notice, next, that the Israelites were to eat the whole lamb; and you who want to have Christ must have the whole of him or none of him. There are some who are willing to take his example, but not his doctrine; they cannot have him. Others wish to take his doctrine, but not his precepts; they cannot have him. Nothing of him must be left, for there is no more in Christ than sinners absolutely need. You cannot satisfy your soul's craving with half a Christ; neither will God allow you to insinuate that there is anything superfluous about his Son. The Jews had to eat all the lamb, and he who would have Christ must have the whole of Christ;—not only Christ as your Substitute, but Christ as your King; not merely Christ to trust, but Christ to obey. He must be to you all that God sets him forth to be, or else he will be nothing at all. Dear hearer, art thou willing thus to accept Christ as the Lamb of God? Art thou willing to have him altogether, to leave nothing of him, and to set aside nothing that appertains to him? Then, thou mayest freely take him as thine own.

The paschal lamb was to be eaten that very night, nothing of it was to remain till the morning; the whole lamb was to be eaten at once, or to be consumed by fire. Now, dear friends, I put the question to you,—Are you willing to have Christ to-night? If there is anyone who wants to have him to-morrow, I cannot promise that he shall have him; but he, who wants Christ to-night, is welcome to have him. If thou canst truly say, "I am willing, at this moment, to take the whole of Christ to be mine, and to accept him just as God gives him," thou hast him already. Wherefore, be of good cheer, for God denies this Lamb to none who are willing unreservedly to receive him. If thou wilt have him, that will of thine is given thee of his grace, so take him freely. As when one cometh to a river, and asks no leave to drink, but quenches his thirst at once, so come to Christ, and freely take what God has provided on purpose for every willing soul. If thou wilt have the whole of Christ, to save thee from living in sin as well as from dying in sin, then thou mayest have him, and have him now; only delay not to take him, lest thou shouldst even die while hearing about him. Remember that solemn injunction, which we united in singing only a few minutes ago,—

> "Hasten, sinner, to be blest,
> Stay not for the morrow's sun,
> Lest perdition thee arrest
> Ere the morrow is begun."

Another instruction, which was given to the Israelites concerning this paschal feast was, that they were to eat it with unleavened bread. Leaven, you know, is usually regarded in Scripture as the type of hypocrisy and other evils; so, in accordance with this symbol, Christ is to be received sincerely. He who wishes to know the value of Christ must not play at receiving him; he must not say that he has him when he has him not. No, dear friend, thy whole heart must be yielded to Christ, and thou must take a whole Christ to thyself, or else he never can be thine. I seem to think that there must be some here who are saying, "Yes, the Lord is

drawing us to himself, and we are willing enough to be drawn to him." Come along, then, look not back, but yield to the gentle pressure of his sacred love; and do it thoroughly. Be out and out in thy surrender to Christ; have no leavened cake of hypocrisy to mar the paschal feast; do not try to be other than thou honestly meanest to be. I beseech thee, trifle not with my Lord and Master. If thou must play the fool, do it with something else, but not with religion. If you will gamble, play with halfpence, as bad boys do; your immortal soul is too precious to be thrown away in a game of pitch and toss. Be in earnest in dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ; put away all leaven out of thy house, and out of thy heart; and let it be with the unleavened bread of real sincerity of heart that thou dost partake of the Lamb of God.

I have thus hurriedly gone over these instructions concerning the passover in order to lead up to this one, which is to be the special theme of my discourse: "With bitter herbs they shall eat it."

I. My first remark with regard to this command is, that JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS THE LAMB OF GOD, IS ALWAYS RECEIVED IN THIS FASHION AT THE FIRST.

Those bitter herbs were a kind of salad or condiment to be eaten with the lamb, and are generally thought to have been lettuce, and endive, and chicory, and such-like green meats, as we call them;—not nauseously bitter, but having a sufficient degree of bitterness to add a relish to the lamb; now, when souls come to Christ, they carry out spiritually what is here set forth in metaphor: "with bitter herbs they shall eat it."

That is to say, whenever anyone really believes in Jesus Christ, there is always, mingled with the joyful belief, *a measure of sorrowful repentance.* "Yes," says the truthful heart, "Jesus Christ died for me; but how grieved I am that I should ever have lived such a life as to need that he should die for me! I read about his terrible agonies, and I perceive that I was the cause of them. It was all for love of me that he came from heaven to earth; because he knew how guilty I should be, therefore was he nailed up to the cross, and put to death." So the penitent soul does not know whether to rejoice or to sorrow. There is a mixture of emotions, there is a bitter sweet and a sweet bitter. I rejoice that Christ has put away my sin, but I sorrow that he should ever have had to do it.

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

I do not believe in that faith which has not a tear in its eye when it looks to Jesus. Dry-eyed faith seems to me to be bastard faith, not born of the Spirit of God. With our joy over pardoned guilt, we must mourn that we pierced the Lord. We think of our past sins; perhaps some of them were very black ones; and as they come up before our recollection, we wish that they could be blotted out of all remembrance. We mourn over the many times in which we resisted the Spirit of God, and rejected the Saviour; and while

we know that all these sins are now forgiven, we cannot help being grieved because of them; and we sorrowfully sing,—

"I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee."

There is another set of bitter herbs that we eat at the time of our conversion, when *there comes a distaste for the things in which we once took pleasure.* As soon as a man knows that he is saved by the shedding of Christ's blood, he begins to dislike the things he once enjoyed; pleasures and amusements of a polluting character, nay, even those of a doubtful sort, at once lose all their former charm. Of course, worldlings say, "The man is a fool; he has turned Puritan; he has gone mad." These are some of the bitter herbs which you will have to eat; things that once seemed quite sweet will appear utterly loathsome, and you will turn away from them with disgust. Your tastes will completely change; your desires will alter; you will not be able always to understand yourself; and, oftentimes, your mouth will be filled with bitter herbs on this account.

It may be that *some of you will have to eat more bitter herbs than others have.* For instance, a man who has been a thief, one who has secretly plundered his employer, must make restitution when he is converted; and that is often a very bitter herb. I have known some who did not like eating it, but there was no rest to their conscience until that was done. Friend, if thou hast anything which belongs to another, restore it, and restore it speedily; how canst thou expect God's blessing to rest upon thee while thou dost retain that which thou hast stolen? Let him that stole steal no more, and let him, as far as he can, make amends for the wrong that he has done. If you have been engaged in an evil trade while unconverted, as soon as you find Christ, you must clear out of that bad business; and if you have gained your livelihood in questionable ways, you must end all that sort of thing, and come right straight out from it, if you would be a follower of Christ. I have known a man, who felt that he must go to one with whom he had been at enmity, and say to him, "I am a Christian now, so let us be friends." I have known some go and humble themselves very much, and eat a lot of their own words; they had a proud spirit, so they would never have acted as they have done if Christ had not changed them by his grace; but when he had met with them, they were ready to do anything that he wished if they might but glorify his holy name. They found that, in eating the lamb, they had also to eat the bitter herbs; yet, surely, none of us need be unwilling to eat the bitter herbs if he may but have the privilege of eating the lamb. If I may but feed on Jesus, I will seek to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and so let him see that I do not follow him in name only, but in deed and in truth.

There are other bitter herbs, too, which we eat when we first come to Christ; they may be called *the herbs of holy anxiety.* When

first you find the Lord, you are half afraid to put one foot before the other, lest you should tread where you ought not. I know that, in my early Christian life, I used to be afraid to speak lest I should say anything amiss; and I was continually on the watch lest I should grieve my blessed Master. I wish we all had this holy tenderness; it is a very proper thing to keep up all your life long But we always begin with it if we begin aright; we are very tender and sensitive in spirit at first. Perhaps, afterwards, we learn to mix more confidence in God with our proper doubtfulness of ourselves; but, at the beginning of our Christian career, not having as much confidence as we ought to have in the promises of God, our anxieties are very real; so that, while we eat the lamb, we take a mouthful of bitter herbs at the same time.

If any of you are feeling sad just now, and are afraid that you may not come to Christ because you are so sad, let me tell you that is the very reason why you may come to him. You have the bitter herbs; now come, and eat the lamb. Your heart is sorrowful; so come, and have it made glad. Come with your burden of sin, come with your brokenness of heart, come with your despair, come just as you are, and partake of the rich provision which God has prepared for you in Christ; and then go on your way with rejoicing.

Thus, I hope I have made it clear to you that Jesus is received at the first as the paschal lamb had to be eaten, that is, with bitter herbs.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS THE SAME WHENEVER WE FEED UPON HIM AFTERWARDS.

At least, I find it to be so in my own case; I confess that *my Lord Jesus is never so sweet to me as when I am thoroughly bowed down under a sense of my own unworthiness.* I often feel far more unworthy than any one of you can feel; for the Lord's grace and mercy towards me make me tremble, and feel ashamed that I am not more earnest about your souls, and not more anxious to bring sinners to Christ. Yet I say again that he is a precious Christ to me; and he is never so precious as when I am most vile in my own sight. Is it not so with you also, beloved? When you are very great in your own esteem, Christ appears little to you; but when you are very little, then Christ becomes all the greater to you; is it not so? When you feel that you are poor, guilty sinners, Christ is regarded by you as a glorious Saviour; but if any of you have begun to spread out the fine peacock feathers of perfectionism, Christ must seem very insignificant to you. It is a bad sign whenever you feel that you do not need to confess sin, or to look to Christ as you did at the first when you said,—

> "I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
> But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all."

Even after you have known Christ for thirty years or more, there is no feeding upon him like feeding upon him with the bitter herbs, with a sense of continued unworthiness pressing upon you, and then does Christ become exceedingly sweet unto your taste.

And I believe, brethren, that it is a blessed thing to feed upon

Christ *with a soft subduedness of spirit.* Full assurance is a grand thing, but I think I have known a kind of full assurance that I would never covet, though it speaks very glibly as though its warfare were accomplished, and its victory were perfectly secure. It is a good thing to be able to read your title clear "to mansions in the skies;" and happy is the man who can always do it; but it is a safe thing to feel the tears of repentance in your eyes, through a deep sense of your unfitness for the skies at present, and to have your heart burdened because you do not feel heaven within you, and you are therefore afraid lest you should not be fit to be within heaven. Cowper wisely wrote,—

> "He has no hope who never had a fear;
> And he that never doubted of his state,
> He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

I would sooner shiver, in dread anxiety, with the poorest sincere soul who ever trembled before God than I would stand in an unwarrantable confidence as to my own security, and boast and brag of my wonderful attainments. God deliver us from that sort of spirit! A quiet, peaceful frame of mind,—a gentle, humble, tender walk with God, seems to me to be the thing that is specially to be desired. When you fear and tremble for all the goodness that God makes to pass before you,—not because you doubt, but because you believe, you become anxious after a holy and gracious fashion. You think I am talking paradoxes; but I know what I mean, even if I cannot make you understand it. You know that you are a child of God, and you realize that you are favoured of the Most High, and therefore you are afraid to do anything that would be derogatory to his divine dignity. I believe that there is no way of eating the lamb acceptably, and that there is no possibility of enjoying Christ to the full without such bitter herbs as these. I know that I never yet had a single mouthful of this paschal supper, which my heart did really digest and assimilate, without having at the same time a bowedness and brokenness of spirit to be as a bitter herb to help the digestion of the heavenly meat.

III. Now, thirdly, dear friends, as our text is true in relation to Christ, who is the blessed gift of God, "his unspeakable gift," I think you will not at all wonder if I say that THIS RULE RUNS THROUGH ALL OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS,—AY, AND OUR TEMPORAL ONES, TOO.

God may give us many temporal blessings; but if we are his children, this principle will hold good, that *bitter herbs will be mingled with all the sweets of life.* If any of you are favoured with great success, you will find that our text is true in your case. God sends bountiful harvests, but not without the oppressive heat that makes the labourer sweat and faint as he gathers in the golden grain. God uplifts men in his gracious providence, as he did David; but David had to eat any quantity of bitter herbs before he reached the throne, and even after he became king, with bitter herbs did he eat his royal dainties; and his son Solomon, who had fewer trials, found so many bitter herbs that he cried out, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." God never intends that there shall be any sweet in this world without something sour to go with it. The rose must

have its thorn; and amongst the wheat, the poppies must still continue to grow.

You child of God, especially, will find it so; for *what if your Heavenly Father gave you all sweet and no bitter?* You would soon grow sick; eating nothing but honey would cause you many a qualm and pain. God does not mean us to build our nests here, so he sends a high wind that makes the trees rock to and fro, that we may look for a more secure place of abode. If we had all that we wanted here, we should never wish to be up and away to that better world which is the goal of all our desires. If the bread was always plentiful upon the table, and the fruits were always abundant in the garden, and the sky was always blue, and the fleece was always ready for the garment, and the brain was always clear, and the feet were always nimble, should we not then forget our God? I am afraid that we should; and, therefore, he sends us these bitter herbs that nothing on earth may content us, and that we may cry, with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Go on, young man, get your degree, and call your friends together to a festival; but "with bitter herbs shall they eat it." And you, young woman, your marriage feast draws nigh; but with bitter herbs shalt thou eat it. Push on, good sir, with that business of yours; you shall enjoy prosperity, but with bitter herbs shall you eat it. Whatever there is, here below, that is the object of lawful desire, you may seek; but always believe that, if you gain it, there will come some salutary medicine with it. Else, if it be not so, thou mayest question whether thou art really a child of God. If there be no stone in thy road, and no cloud in thy sky, and if there has never been such a thing, but thou hast had unbroken prosperity, I tremble for thee, and I say, with David, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

IV. I will not now dwell upon many other points which I might mention, but will just briefly show you that our text also applies to us IN LIVING A GODLY LIFE.

It may be fulfilled to us *through persecution from the world.* You who have fed upon Christ, and now wish to serve the Lord with your whole heart, must not reckon that you will be able to do it without paying a heavy price for the privilege. You will have many bitter herbs to eat, whoever may be allowed to go without them. A man who tries to be honest will find many people who will give him bitter herbs to eat. If you speak the truth wherever you are, you will often have bitter herbs handed to you. Try to do that which is right, either amongst workingmen or amongst merchant princes; try to lead a really gracious, separated life, and see whether the seed of the serpent does not hiss at you, and try to bite and sting you. There is no need for you to try to grow your own bitter herbs; your enemies will supply them to you for nothing, and you shall have them often when you would rather be without them. If you tack about, and shift your course

with every wind, perhaps you may curry favour with your foes, and they may allow you to eat your lamb without any bitter herbs. But if you are straight as a pikestaff, and clear as the light, you shall soon have bitter herbs to eat, depend upon it.

If nobody should give you any, *you will find some growing in your own garden;* for, even beside that sweet flower called heartsease, there will grow in our breast many herbs that are anything but sweet. For instance, if a man wishes to be downright true, he will sometimes detect himself in being false; his very love of truth will make him see that fault, and it will be a bitter herb for him to eat. One who wishes never to exaggerate in speaking, may himself discover that he has done so; he must eat that herb, bitter as it is. One who wishes to be scrupulously correct in all his business transactions, may find that he has made a mistake across the counter; he may easily be entrapped into a dishonest action, and then he will have many bitter herbs to eat. We cannot gain a victory over the natural tendencies of our corrupt nature, even through divine grace, without having some bitter herbs to eat. Then eat them like men; they will help to cleanse you, they will be a blessing to you, and they will make the struggle after righteousness, and honour, and virtue, for God's sake, and for Christ's sake, to be all the easier to you. May the Lord graciously enable you, in that struggle, to come off more than conquerors through him who hath loved you!

V. The next point is, that EVEN IN TRYING TO WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST, you will have to eat some bitter herbs.

I am very thankful that I am addressing so large a company of dear Christian friends who help to bring others to Christ. I wish that I could say that of all of you who are members of the church, but I can truly say it of most of you. Ye are our glory, and our crown of rejoicing, because ye live to bless others. Now, I believe that you will join with me in confessing that, *this holy work has been accompanied by much soul-humbling.* If ever you have brought a soul to Christ, there have been bitter herbs in your feast of joy over it. I mean, that you have never brought anyone to Christ without a great deal of trouble. Does anybody think that our sermons and our Sunday-school teaching cost us nothing? "Oh!" says one, "I can preach off-hand." Yes, I daresay you can, but I never heard of an off-hand farm that brought forth an off-hand crop. "Oh! I have nothing to do but to sit down, and when the Bible is opened, just explain it to the boys and girls gathered around me; and I keep good order among them." Yes, perhaps you do; but the best order that could be given to you would be an order to go home; if you go to your class with no agony of spirit, no anguish of heart, what good can come of your teaching? Dear brothers and sisters, I am certain that, if God has ever honoured you by making you the means of the conversion of any of your fellow-sinners, you have rejoiced greatly; but you have known that it was, under God, the result of much previous agony of spirit on their behalf. Ay! and, often, at the very time when God has blessed you, you have had a bitter disappointment. You thought

that dear girl really was brought to Christ, yet she turns out, before long, to be a giddy chit; and there is that bright boy, you did believe that he was saved. So he is, perhaps, yet you see grave faults in him, and you are very much grieved about him. Yes, that will always be the case with our work here, and it is only another illustration of our text: "with bitter herbs shall they eat it."

Possibly, *if God gives you very great success, he will take away from you, to a large extent, the power to rejoice in it.* I know one, who seldom lives through a day without hearing of many who have been brought to Christ by him, but who, nevertheless, has long been incapable of taking any delight in anything he does, and who is obliged to live out of himself entirely, and on God alone; and I think, brothers and sisters, that in proportion as you know the truth about this matter, you will agree with me that it is so with you as well, and that, somehow or other, if God means to bless you, he takes care to break the neck of your pride, lest you should be lifted up with conceit, and fall into the snare of the devil. It is a high honour to be used by God as his instrument in blessing the poorest chimney-sweep, or the humblest child; but you may depend upon it that, if he honours you in public, he will whip you behind the door, and he will make you feel that you are nothing when he gets you by yourself.

VI. I expect that the rule of our text will hold good with us to the last, and that it will be applied IN MEETENING US FOR HEAVEN.

Some of us will, within a very short time, eat our passover supper in another sense, for we shall pass over Jordan, and enter the heavenly Canaan. We shall go to the top of Pisgah, not to view the landscape, and go down again, but to fall asleep there, and so spiritually to pass over the Jordan of death, into the land of the blessed, where God will reveal himself fully to us. You will stand before long, dear brother or sister, with your staff in your hand, just as the Israelites did, and with your loins girt, and those who see you will say to you, "Whither away? Whither away?" and you will answer, "We are going to our own country,—to the Promised Land above." It may be that you will have bitter herbs to eat at that time; do not, however, think any more of them than you do of those which you eat at your own table. Nobody ever turns away from the lamb because the sauce that goes with it seems sharp; you say, "No; it gives a relish to the meat." So, when you and I come to die, it may be painful to bid farewell to dear ones here below; but that will be like eating bitter herbs. They will only give the greater zest to that last supper on earth which will melt into a blessed breaking of the fast in heaven. You have often seen the sun go down, have you not? What a fine sight it is! He often seems to look far larger in the setting than he ever did before; and if the clouds come round about him, are they not often the very glory of the sunset? And have you not seen his departing rays brighten them all up? No painter could ever have put together such charming colours; the mighty Artist of heaven has himself displayed his skill, but how did he make all that splendour? It was out of clouds; they were the canvas which was bespattered

with the hues of heaven by the sublime Artist. So shall it be with you, dear friend, at last. Your old age, your pains, your groans, shall only be a part of the splendour which God gives to his people when they set at the last like the sun. Be of good courage, then, and fear not. Nobody stops away from a feast because of the salad that is served with the viands; so let nobody stop away from Christ, or away from heaven, because of the little griefs he may have to bear, the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, which work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS XII. 1—20.

Verses 1, 2. *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

God thinks a great deal of the redemption of his people. When he redeemed them out of their Egyptian bondage, he took care that the mighty deed should be worthily commemorated. Thenceforth, the Jewish year was to begin with the celebration of the national deliverance; and now, when any of us are converted to God, and so are set free from the slavery of sin, we should reckon that then we really begin to live. All the previous part of our life has been wasted; but when we are brought truly to know God, through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, then have we realized, indeed, what life is. The month of our conversion should be to us the beginning of months, the first month of the year to us.

3, 4. *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.*

The worship of God must be rendered in an orderly manner, with due thoughtfulness and preparation. This paschal supper was not to be celebrated in any fashion that the people might choose; but they were to take time to have the lamb properly examined, that it might be found perfect in every respect, and that everything might be set in order so that the feast should be observed with due reverence and solemnity. Let us take care that we act thus in all our devotions; let us never rush to prayer or hasten to praise; but let us pause a while, and think what we are about to do, lest we offer the sacrifice of fools, and so cause the Lord to bid us take back that which we have brought to put upon his altar without due thoughtfulness.

5. *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

It was to be a type of Christ, and, therefore, it must be the best that they had. It must be in the prime of its strength, otherwise it would not be a fit emblem of the "strong Son of God" whose mighty love moved him to give himself to death for us.

6—10. *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the*

upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

Everything was to be done exactly according to God's order; the alteration of the slightest detail would have spoiled it all. I wish that all Christians would remember this rule with regard to the ordinances of God's house. They are not for us to make, or for us to alter, but for us to keep.

11. *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the* LORD'S *passover.*

They were thus to exercise an act of faith. Why were they to eat in haste, but that they expected soon to be gone? They were to stand like travellers who are starting upon a journey, believing that God was about to set them free. Oh, that we would always exercise faith in all our devotions, for without faith it must ever be impossible to please God.

12, 13. *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the* LORD. *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you,—*

What a grand gospel statement that is! When the sinner sees the blood, it is for his comfort; but it is God's sight of the blood that is, after all, the grand thing; and when is it that he does not see it?

13—20. *And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the* LORD *throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.*

Thus we see God instituting a commemoration of the deliverance of his people out of Egypt. How much more ought you and I, with joyful gladness, to remember the deliverance of our soul from the slavery of sin and Satan! Let us never forget it. I should like to refresh the memories of bygone times with you who know the Lord; the Lord help you now, with deepest gratitude, to recollect the day when first you saw your Saviour, and the yoke was taken from your neck, and the burden from your shoulder, glory be to the delivering Lord!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—728, 561, 520.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HIGH ROCK.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 26TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, early in the year 1859.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."—Psalm lxi. 2.

IT is supposed by many that David wrote this Psalm at the time when he fled from his son Absalom. That trial was one of the most grievous of all the afflictions of David's greatly-chequered life. It was but a little thing for him to be hunted by Saul like a partridge upon the mountains; it was a small matter for him to have to take refuge with Achish, and to sojourn among the Philistines an alien from his mother's children; nay, all the afflictions of his preceding life were but light trials compared with the revolt of Absalom. He was his father's favourite son, one in whom his soul delighted, for he was a comely personage in his outward appearance, and he had a lordly and kingly bearing; he was David's darling, although, in his moral character, utterly unworthy of this distinction. This child of his, who was the nearest to his heart, had the greatest opportunity to cut him to the quick. Those things which we allow to take the chief place in our bosoms have the most power to give us grief. Absalom, first of all, kills his brother, and then, by dint of courtesy and such pretended generosity as demagogues always know how to use, won the affections of David's people from their rightful monarch, and then blew the trumpet, and set himself up as king in opposition to his father. Nay, more than this, he sought his father's life; it was not sufficient for him to seize the crown, but he longed to smite the head that should have worn it. His father was driven from his house, and was made to cross, with a few attendants, over the brook Kedron, and to go away from the sanctuary of God; he had to dwell in the midst of a wood, and sleep among his armed men, and, at other times, to camp out upon the open plain. Who can tell the griefs of this monarch? Wave after wave had rolled over him. He had often said that he desired to be like the sparrow and the swallow, dwelling beneath the eaves of God's sanctuary; and now his great trouble is that he is driven

far away from God's house to what he calls "the end of the earth." As he thought of the cause of his exile, how grieved must he have been! For his son, his darling son, the son of his heart, the son whom he had pardoned, the son whom he had honoured, the son whom he had recalled from the banishment he richly deserved,—this son had smitten him. We know that old quotation from Shakespeare, which is repeated many and many a time, and is always true,—

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child!"

Yet here was one who was not only unthankful, but who drove his father into exile, and sought his life. David always clung to this child of his even in the time of his greatest iniquity. When at last he was compelled to send out his army against the rebel, you remember how he commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom;" and when he was killed, you know how David lamented over him, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Now, from the very fact that David loved this young man so much, his sorrows must have been peculiarly poignant. If a man can bring his mind to thrust out from his bosom one who has proved ungrateful, then half the battle is over. If love can cut the link,—can say, "I have done with thee, I will reckon thee now no more my child,"—then the heart steels itself against its deepest sorrow, and the arrow rattleth only against the harness. But it was not so with David, he still opened wide his breast to his unworthy son.

Let us, who stand in the relation of children to our parents, remember that it is in our power to give them the greatest possible grief; and yet would we not, each of us, sooner die than that those who brought us forth should have to lament on account of us? Yet, haply, there are some of you who are bringing your parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. O ye who are cursing your father's God,—who are desecrating the day that your parents reckon to be holy,—ye who despise the gospel which your father and mother love, remember that ye are not only grieving God, but you are grieving your parents also! Push them not into the tomb before their time, lest their ashes testify against you; and lest, in the hour of *your* trouble, when *your* children treat you in like manner, you should have to learn the bitterness of rearing in your own bosom the serpent that shall sting you with the deadliest venom. Let each of us take heed that we deal gently with our parents, and always treat kindly those who have tenderly fostered us.

With this preface, let us now turn to our text, and I think we shall understand it all the better from this little reference to David's history. There are three truths here. The first is, that *prayer is always available:* "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." The second truth is, that *sometimes even the believer cannot get to Christ as he could wish,* but that then there is a way provided for leading him to Christ: "Lead me

to the rock that is higher than I." Then, in the third place, we shall consider *Christ under the aspect of a rock that is higher than we are.*

I. In the first place, let us recollect that PRAYER IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE,—in every place, and in every condition of our spirit: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee."

Suppose it is possible for us to be banished to the uttermost verge of the green earth, to "rivers unknown to song;" suppose us to be hastened far away, where dwindling daylight dieth out, and where the sun's bleak ray scarcely scattereth light on the world,—where vegetation, dwarfing and declining, at last dies out; suppose us to be banished into exile, without a friend and without a helper,—even there, from the end of the earth, we should find that prayer to God was still available. In fact, if there be a place nearer than another to God's throne, it is just the end of the earth, for the end of the earth is the beginning of heaven. When our strength ends, there God's omnipotence begins. Nature's extremity is God's opportunity. If wicked monarchs should banish all God's people, their banishment would be an object of contempt, for how can they banish those who are strangers wherever they may be? Is not my Father's house a large one? Yon dome, the blue sky, its roof; the rolling seas, the swelling floods, the green meads, the huge mountains,—are not these the floors of his house? And where can I be driven out of the dominions of my God, and beyond the reach of his love? Banishment may seem a trouble to the Christian; but if he looketh up, and seeth his Father's house, and beholdeth the smile of his God, he will know that such a thing as banishment is to him an impossibility. But supposing us to be exiled from everything that is dear to us, even then we should not be shut out from access to God's throne.

I think David meant, by the expression, "the end of the earth," a place where he should be far away from his friends, far away from human help, and far away from God's sanctuary.

God's people are sometimes brought into such a condition that they are *far away from friends.* Such an one walks the streets of London, and thinks, "Oh, if I could only tell my sorrow to a friend, then I might find some relief! But amidst all the myriad faces that hurry like a stream along the road, I see not one that tempts me to tell my tale. I look around, and find myself a stranger amidst multitudes of my countrymen." Perhaps you know what it is to have a trouble which you are compelled to bear yourself, which you could not describe even to those in your own house, though your friends would have been ready to help you if they had known; yet it was such that, with all their readiness, they would not have had ability to assist you in it, the biggest words could not have told it, and the bitterest tears could not have spelled it out. You were far away from friends in reality, though they were all round you. Now this is what David meant by "the end of the earth,"—far away from friends,—yet even then, when friend and helper and lover failed, did he cry unto his God.

Again, he meant, by "the end of the earth," *far away from human help.* There are difficulties, into which the true believer is brought, that no human hand can remove. His spiritual affairs are weights too heavy for human strength to lift; though all the giants of earth should come and strain their backs until their shoulders should give way, and their limbs should totter beneath the enormous load, yet the spiritual necessities of the Christian could not be carried by them,—they are a burden intolerable for human shoulders; none but God can sustain them. There are times when we are sighing after spiritual mercies, when we are groaning under the withdrawal of God's countenance, when our sins are hunting us like packs of wolves, when afflictions are rolling over us like huge billows,—when faith is little, and fear is great, when hope is dim, and doubt becomes terrible and dark,—then we are far away from human help; but, blessed be God, even then we may cry unto him.

> "When anxious cares disturb the breast,
> When threatening foes are nigh,
> To him we pour our deep complaint,
> To him for succour fly."

Nay, more, even in temporal affairs, there are times when the Christian gets into such a place that no earthly friend can help him. He has made some mistake, perhaps; in the ardency of his zeal to do right, he has done wrong; in the attempt to run in the ways of God, he overshot the road, and got into another place, and found himself in the path of evil when he hoped to be in the way of right. Such things have happened; business men, with all their carefulness, have made miscalculations, and have found themselves plunged into difficulties from which they see no way of escape. In vain do others offer help; wealth would not avail, for character is at stake; yet even then, "from the end of the earth," when human help has failed them, they have cried unto God; and if they have cried in faith, they have never found that God has ceased to hear as long as they have continued to cry unto him.

By "the end of the earth," I think, too, David means *at a distance from the means of grace.* Sometimes, by sickness, either personal or the sickness of our relatives, we are detained from the house of God; at other times, in journeying by land or upon the sea, we are unable to be in God's sanctuary, and to use the means of grace. This is a great deprivation to God's people. You will find that a true Christian had rather miss a meal than lose his daily portion of Scripture, or his frequent resort to the house of prayer. That man is no child of God who does not value the means of grace. I tremble for that man's piety who professes himself able to maintain the vital spark of grace within him when the means of grace are at hand, and he lives in neglect of them. Some people, if they go to a watering-place, or a little way out of town, say, "Well, there is nobody here who preaches my sentiments, so I shall not go anywhere." I would remind them that the apostle Paul said, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some

is." If there is no place of worship specially dedicated to God, we bless him that—

> "Where'er we seek him, he is found,
> And every place is hallowed ground;"—

but if there is a building that is open for the worship of God, even if I could not enjoy the preaching of the minister, I would go there to join in the singing of Christ's praises, and to offer my prayer with the multitude that keep holy-day. Still, there must be, in our lives, different times when we are away from the sanctuary of God; and to the Christian, that will be like being at the end of the earth; but then, thanks be to God, we may still cry unto him. When no Sabbath bell shall summon us to the house of prayer, when no servant of the Lord shall proclaim, with happy voice, the promise of pardoning mercy, when there shall not be seen the multitude on bended knee, and when the sacred shout of praise is unheard, and we are far away from the gatherings of God's house,—yet we are not far away from him, and we may still say to him, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee."

It seems, however, that the psalmist was in a worse plight than this; for a man might be at the end of the earth, and still be happy; for it is not the place that makes the man, but the man that makes the place. A man might be in paradise even in hell itself, if his heart were right with God. Let a man have his heart full of peace and joy and happiness, and it is impossible to make that man miserable. I have often thought that, when people find fault with their station in life, they are making a great mistake; they should find fault with themselves. Many a man is miserable whose head wears a crown, and many are happy whose heads have no place of repose. Some who are in rags have rich hearts, while many who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, have starving spirits; for, after all, it is the mind that is the standard of the man, and if the mind be happy, the place where the man is does not signify at all.

But, alas for poor David! he had been wrong without and wrong within, too, so that he had to cry, "My heart is overwhelmed." I find, in Calvin's notes on this text a most extraordinary translation, and, as he says, a very harsh one: "While my heart is turned about; that is, tossed hither or thither, or agitated." There is an expression of a similar character where John Bunyan says that he was exceedingly tumbled up and down in his mind. It does seem that one meaning of this text may be, "When my spirit is tumbled about,"—when it is out of order, when it is brought into a kind of chaos and confusion, when, to use another word which expresses closely the idea of the Hebrew, "My spirit is wrapped over and over,"—when it is covered as a man covers his face in the day of grief, because his sorrow is so great that he shuns the sun, and would not have his fellow-creature's eye behold the anguish of his soul;—"even then," says he, "when my spirit is overwhelmed, will I cry unto thee." Turn the heart upside down, and then you will get the idea of its being overwhelmed. Even

then, what saith the psalmist? "Ye people, pour out your heart before him." If your heart is turned over, let it be emptied before the Lord. David says, in another Psalm, "I pour out my soul in me." How foolish that was! It did him no good, it was the wrong place for his soul to be poured out; he was much wiser when he said, "Pour out your heart before him." It is a happy way to pray, when the heart is turned upside down, to spill all its contents at the foot of the throne of grace. Perhaps, sometimes, the overwhelming of our heart is only meant to empty all its dregs out of it, that the last particle of self-righteousness, and self-reliance, and self-confidence, may be drained out at the mercy-seat, that there may be room for an overflowing abundance of divine grace.

Imagine a vessel at sea, and you can get an idea of the meaning of our text. It has been labouring in a storm; sometimes lifted up to heaven, as though its masts would sweep the stars; then again descending until its keel seemed dragging on the ocean bed; first staggering this way, and then that way, reeling to and fro, now rushing forward and now starting back,—like a drunken man, or like a madman who has lost his way. At last, a huge sea comes rolling on; its white crest of foam can be seen in the distance, and the sailors give up all for lost; on comes the wave, gathering up all its strength till it dashes against the ship, and—down the vessel goes, it is overwhelmed. The decks are swept, the masts are gone, the timbers are creaking, the ship descends, and is sucked down as in a whirlpool; all is lost. "Now," says David, "that is the case with my heart; it is overwhelmed, drawn into a vortex of trouble, borne down by a tremendous sea of difficulty, crushed and broken; the ribs of my soul seem to have given way; every timber of my vessel is cracked and gone out of its place. My heart is overwhelmed within me." Can you now get an idea of the extreme sorrow of the psalmist's spirit? "Yet," says he, "even then, will I cry unto thee." Oh, noble faith, that can cry amidst the shrieking of the tempest, and the howling of the storm! Oh, glorious faith, that from the bottom of the sea can shoot its arrows to the heights of heaven! Oh, masterpiece of faith, that from a broken spirit can present prevailing prayer! Oh, glorious triumph, that from the end of the earth can send a prayer which can reach all the way to heaven!

And now, Christian, may God help thee to make up thy mind to this, that where'er thou art, thou wilt never leave off praying, whatever the devil says to thee. If he should urge thee to forsake the mercy-seat, say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." If he should say that you have sinned too much to pray, tell him his argument proves the reverse: the more you have sinned, the more you should pray. If he tells you that your difficulties are tremendous, tell him that the very greatness of the difficulties in which you are involved should bear you nearer to God. Never cease to cry whilst thou hast breath; and when thou hast no breath, still cry. As long as thou canst speak, cry unto him; and when thou canst not speak, let groanings that cannot be uttered still go up before God's throne. Cease not to pray in every difficulty, and in every strait betake

thyself to thy closet, for there thou shalt find God, if thou canst not find him anywhere else.

Let me also say this word to anyone who has begun to pray, but who has not yet found peace with God, although he is overwhelmed by a sense of his guilt. My dear friend, if God has overwhelmed you with a sense of sin, and if you feel as if you were far away from mercy,—at the very end of the earth,—yet, I beseech you, cry unto him. Mark, our text says, "Cry." Oh, what power there is in that simple act of crying! As I rode here, this evening, I saw a boy sitting down upon the pavement, crying with all his might about something or other he had broken; and I observed a lady, who was going by, stop a moment, for the poor fellow's face was so much awry, and the tears were flowing so plentifully that she seemed as if she must give him something; and, indeed, I felt inclined, if I had not been in a hurry to come here, to stop and ask him what he was crying for, for one cannot bear to see a fellow-creature weeping. All beggars, who want to deceive, take to crying, for they know that has an effect upon susceptible ladies who are passing by; there is great power in tears, and these people know it. The best style of prayer is that which cannot be called anything else but a cry. Now, if you cannot pray as many do,—if you cannot stand up in a prayer-meeting, and pray fluently and eloquently like others do,—so long as the Lord enables you to cry, I beseech you do not leave off crying. Cry, "Lord, have mercy on me;" "Lord, save, or I perish;" "Lord, appear unto me;" "I the chief of sinners am; Lord, manifest thyself to me." Cry, cry, cry, poor sinner; and he that heareth the young ravens when they cry will hear thee. Do not think that the voice of thy crying shall be lost. The voice of boasting dies away unheard, but the voice of crying penetrates the ear of God, reaches his heart, and moves his hand to give a plenitude of blessings. Above all things, sinner, if thou feelest thy need of a Saviour, keep on crying; Satan can never harm thee while God helps thee to cry. So long as thou hast a word of prayer on thy lip, the law has not a word of condemnation to utter against thee. If thou canst cry at God's mercy-seat, then that is a proof that Christ is crying on thy behalf at his Father's glory-seat. Be thou instant in prayer, and thou shalt be successful in it. When thy heart is overwhelmed, from the end of the earth cry unto God.

II. I must speak very briefly upon the second point, which is this. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN EVEN A BELIEVER CANNOT GET TO CHRIST AS HE DESIRES.

Then, thank God there is the prayer of our text: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Some people make out faith to be a marvellously easy thing, and so it is in theory, but it is the hardest thing in the world in practice. If men are to be saved on the condition of their repenting and believing, they can be no more saved than on the condition of their being perfect, unless there is added to this condition the promise that the God who requires faith will give faith, and work repentance in them. I have been astonished to find, in this age, that there are great preachers, and men who, I have no doubt, gather many around them, who tell the people that

the condition and the ground of the sinner's justification are his faith, his repentance, and his obedience. Why, the ground of our justification is the righteousness of Christ; and as to conditions, there is no condition at all, for God gives justification freely, and he gives faith, and he gives repentance, too; it is all his gift. There never was a man saved by faith or repentance which he performed as a matter of duty. Albeit that the Word of God demands of every man that he should submit himself to God by repentance, and lay hold of Christ by faith, yet no man ever will or ever can do this of himself; it is only the sovereign will of God and the sovereign grace of God that give repentance and faith.

Sometimes God, in his sovereignty, is pleased to show a man his sin, and not to show him his Saviour, for a season; he strips the sinner, perhaps he leaves him to shiver in the cold before he clothes him, just to let him know what a boon that robe of Christ's righteousness is. He kills him, pierces him through and through with the law, and there lets him lie in utter inability, for a season, before he quickens him again, and makes him spiritually alive. The fact is, God acts as he chooses with those whom he saves. He sometimes gives repentance and faith at the same time, just as the thunder sometimes follows the lightning at once; at other times, he gives repentance, and then he makes us tarry for many a day before he gives us full assurance of our interest in Christ; but they are sure to follow one another, sooner or later. God never gave conviction without at last giving faith, he never led a man out of himself without at last leading him to Christ; if he brought him down to despair, he afterwards lifted him up to hope; but, still, there may be a gap between the two, and during such a period it is our business to use this blessed prayer, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Oh, help me to believe! Lord, enable me to see the need of thy Son, give me the power to look unto him who was pierced, and, as thou hast given me eyes to weep, so give me eyes to look on him, and grace to rejoice in him as mine." So, you see, if we cannot believe, if doubts so overwhelm us that we cannot get to Christ to our own satisfaction, remember that it is the Holy Spirit's office to draw us to Christ; and we may therefore pray to him, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

III. We are now coming to that part of the text which most of all delights my soul, the thought of JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN WE ARE.

We have all various standards for measuring things; and, after all, men must measure by themselves. If you hear a man praising another, you will generally find that the reason he praises that other is because he sees in him something very much like what he possesses himself. "There," says he, "I love a man who is honest and outspoken." He means, all the while, that he thinks himself a remarkably honest and outspoken man, therefore he loves to see himself reproduced in another. After all, we generally measure with our own measuring-rods; we take ourselves to be the standard for other people. A few nights ago, I proved this in my own case. Going along Bermondsey, I looked in at the shop-windows to see

what time it was; one clock said ten minutes to seven, another said seven o'clock, and another said ten minutes past. Then I began to think what a pity it was I had not my own watch with me,—what was that but a belief that my own watch was infallible, and that all the clocks were probably wrong? There is a great deal of trying ourselves on the touchstones of our own infallible selves, and even the Christian is not altogether free from this practice till he gets to heaven. So the Lord graciously adapts his Word to our poor littleness, and speaks of Jesus as the Rock higher than we are.

Come hither, beloved, and let us measure the Rock Christ Jesus so far as we can by comparison. Here is a man who is a great sinner. "Ah!" he says, "I am indeed a great sinner; my iniquities reach so high that they have ascended above the very stars; they have gone before me to the judgment-seat of God, and they are clamouring for my destruction." Well, sinner, come thou here, and measure this Rock. Thou art very high, it is true; but this Rock is higher than thou art. Estimate thyself at the greatest thou possibly canst; set thy sins down at some inconceivable height; if thou hast thought thyself to be a very Goliath in sin; if thou sayest, "I am as big a sinner as Saul of Tarsus was," put thy sin pile on pile, tier on tier, nay, borrow thy neighbour's sins; take them all, and then recollect that—

> "If all the sins that men have done
> In will, in word, in thought and deed,
> Since worlds were made, and time began,
> Were laid on one poor sinner's head;
> The blood of Jesus Christ alone
> Could for this mass of sin atone,
> And sweep it all away."

However high thy sin may be, there is the covert of a Rock in a weary land higher than thou art, and under this thou mayest shelter thyself.

Here comes another forward; he is not a man full of doubts and fears, but he is a man of hopeful spirit. "Oh!" says he, "I have many sins, but I hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will take them all away. I have many wants, but I hope that he will supply them. I shall have many temptations, but I hope that he will ward them off. I shall have many difficulties, but I hope he will carry me through them." Ah! man, I like to see thee have a good long measuring-rod, when it is made of hope. Hope is a tall companion; he wades right through the sea, and is not drowned; you cannot kill him, do what you may. Hope is one of the last blessings God gives us, and one that abides last with us. If a man is foodless, and without covering, still he hopes to see better days by-and-by. Now, sinner, thy hopes, I would have thee to see, are very tall, and very high; but remember, this Rock is higher than any of thy hopes. Hope whatever thou pleasest; let thy hope expand itself; let it climb the highest mountain, and stand on it; let it lift up itself higher and yet higher, but this Rock is higher still. Christ is a better Christ than thou canst hope for; he has more mercy than thou hopest for; he has more power to save than thou hopest to receive, more love

than thou canst hope to have, he has a better heaven for thee than thou couldst hope to enjoy.

But here comes another, and he says, "Ah! my hope has grown strong, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is a precious Christ. I can speak well of him, for he has been my sure defence in every time of war, my refuge in every time of distress, my granary in every hour of famine, my light in every night of darkness. I can speak well of him; and in consequence of what I know of him, I can believe that he is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. I believe him to be all that he says he is; I believe in his Word; I rejoice in him; my faith scarcely knows a bound when I begin to think what he is, and what he has done for me." Ay, but he is a Rock higher than thy faith. I love to see thy faith mounting up very high, but Christ is better than thy faith, and higher than thy faith. Why, man, if thy faith were twice as great as it is, Christ would be a warrant for it all. Nay, if thy faith could be multiplied a thousandfold, so that thou couldst believe more of him, and better things of him, and higher things of him, still he would be higher than thy faith could ever climb. I do hope to grow in faith, and get more and more of that celestial virtue. I think I believe my Master better now than I did once, though sometimes I think my faith faileth me. Yet sure I am that I do enjoy a quieter conscience than I did, and a more peaceful calm than at one time I experienced; and I hope to believe in him still more. I pray that my faith may continually increase, so that, being rooted and grounded in him, I may grow up to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus. But this I know, though you or I should grow till our faith should be greater than that of Paul, till it should be such a faith that it should say to the fig tree, "Be thou plucked up by the roots," or to the mountain, "Be thou cast into the sea," and it should be done; still, even then, Christ would be higher than our faith. We might believe a great deal about him, but would faith grasp all then? It has long arms, but not long enough to encompass Christ; he is greater than faith itself could conceive him to be.

Here comes another; he says, "Ah! blessed be God, I have a golden measuring-rod here;—not that of hope, or fear, or faith, but, better still, the measuring-rod of enjoyment." "Ah!" says one, "how high have I been in enjoyment of Christ! He hath taken me to Calvary, and there I have seen the flowing of his precious blood,—

> "'With divine assurance knowing
> He hath made my peace with God.'

"Not content with that, he has taken me to Tabor; there I have seen my Lord transfigured, and have beheld his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Nay, more, he has taken me to the top of Pisgah, and he has bidden me 'view the landscape o'er.' I have seen the joys which he has reserved for them that love him." "But," says the believer, "Christ has said to me, 'Friend, come up higher.' When I first went to the feast, I sat

in the lower room of repentance: he came in, and said, 'Friend, come up higher;' and he took me into another chamber called faith. And then he came in again, and said, 'Friend, come up higher;' and he took me to the upper room of assurance. Then he saw me again, and he said, 'Friend, come up higher;' and he took me to the upper room of communion. And sometimes he seems to me to say, 'Friend, come up higher, into the ecstatic bliss which the highest degrees of constant fellowship can give;' and I am now waiting only till he should say, 'Come up higher,' and take me to his own bosom, to tarry with him for ever."

Ah, well! I am glad to hear thee talk thus; I would I had many of those whose pastures are in these high places, many who could say that they had grown tall in these delightful things; but, remember, this Rock is higher than thou art. All thou hast ever enjoyed of Christ is but as the beginning of a topless mountain. When I have been in Scotland, I have gone up some of the hills there; and I have thought, "This is a very high place indeed; what a fine view there is, what a height I have reached!" "Ah!" someone has said, "but if you were to see the Alps, this hill would only seem like the beginning, you would only have got to the foot when you had climbed as high as this;" and so it is with you. By your experience, your sweet enjoyment, you think you have reached the top of the mountain; but Christ comes and whispers to you, "Look yonder, far above those clouds; you have only begun to go up; this hill of communion is only one step; as yet, you have only taken a child's leap; you have farther to go, far higher than you could imagine or conceive." Ah! this is indeed a Rock higher than thou art, the highest in communion, and the next to the throne of God.

"Well," cries another, "from what I have heard, and what I have read in God's Word, I am expecting very great things of Christ when I shall see him as he is. Oh, sir, if he be better than the communion of his saints can make him, if he be sweeter than all his most eloquent preachers can speak of him, if he be so delightful that those who know him best cannot tell his beauties, what a precious—what a glorious—what an inconceivable Christ he must be!" Ah, friend, I am glad thou art measuring Christ by thine expectation! But let me tell thee, high as thy expectations are, he is higher than thou art. Expect what thou mayest; but when thou seest him, thou wilt say with the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me." You may sit down, and think of Christ's glories and splendours, of the happiness that he has provided for his people, till you lose yourself in a very sea of delightful meditation. The promise dropped into thy heart may go on widening in circles till thou hast grasped a whole universe of pleasure and delight in contemplating the name of Christ; but, remember, when thou hast conceived the most, Christ the Rock is still far above what thou hast conceived and imagined.

Let us pause here, and ask,—What shall we do with a hill that is higher than we are? Shall we lie for ever at its base, and not attempt to climb it? God forbid! Shall we pretend that we have climbed it? That were presumption; so let us press forward, evermore

ascending it, ever crying when we get at the greatest height, "Lord, still lead me up, still lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am; lead me on, O Lord, till I come to heaven, and even then, still lead me beside the living fountains of water, still lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am; ever help me to be climbing, pressing forward, looking not on that which is behind, but on that which is before, pressing forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

Now, as some of you will be exercised with troubles, remember that the Rock is higher than you are; and when your troubles reach you, if you are not high enough to escape them, climb up to the Rock Christ, for there is no trouble that can reach you when you get there. Satan will be howling at you, and perhaps he will be nibbling at your heel, barking and biting at you; so climb into the Rock Christ, and he will not be able to reach you, and you will scarcely hear his howling; he will be low down in the valley when you are in the Rock higher than he is. Fears will arise, and doubts will come in like a flood; there is no place so safe in the time of a flood as a high rock, so climb to the Rock Christ, and then, though the waves of the sea roar, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, you will be secure if you are on the Rock that is higher than you are. And oh! while the world is dragging you down, for ever be seeking to be climbing up. If the devil says, "Come down again, and be worldly; come down, and be selfish," always cry, "Lord, lead me up, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am. My country is in the skies, help me to be climbing upwards; never permit me to descend, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am."

And as for you who are still under a sense of sin, who have not yet found the Saviour, let this be your prayer, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I am." Do not get measuring Christ by yourselves. As high as heaven is above the earth, so high are his thoughts above your thoughts, and his ways above your ways. O beloved, you should measure God's grace by the immeasurable; not by your nothingness, but by his infinity! Remember, God's mercy is beyond all bounds, for it swelleth above the flood of our sins. If our sins be as mountains, Christ's mercy, like the stars, shines as much above the mountains as above the valleys. Cry out, sinner, when Satan is dragging thee down to the pit, "Lord, save me from the devouring flames, and lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." And then, thank God, Christ is a Rock; not a mound that is raised by man; and that Rock shall stand for ever; and if I get on it, there is no fear that the Rock will shake. I may shake on it, but it will never shake under me; and if my enemies try to attack me, I can hide myself in the clefts of the Rock, where they cannot reach me, and though ten thousand ages roll away, and many a stone is moved from its place, this Rock shall still abide,—

"When rolling years shall cease to move."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURED FACE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 2ND, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 1st, 1880.

"His face did shine as the sun."—Matthew xvii. 2.

WHILE our Lord Jesus Christ was upon this earth, he was as much divine as before he left his Father's court in heaven. He never ceased to be God, nor was the Godhead for a single moment separated from his humanity. He was, therefore, always glorious. Yet was there a greater glory about him than could usually be seen. This may seem to be a paradox, but it is true. For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for him to restrain or hide his glory. It is for ever his glory that he concealed his glory; and that, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor; though he was God over all, blessed for ever, he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Our Lord's humiliation was all perfectly voluntary; and I should not be surprised to learn that, when alone, his face was frequently radiant with glory as it was on this occasion of his transfiguration. I can easily imagine that he may often have returned to what must have been his natural condition when there was no human eye to gaze upon him. If you carefully read the four Gospels, I think you will see that there are indications that the glory was always there ready to flash forth. What was it that made those, who came to take him in the garden of Gethsemane, go backward, and fall to the ground when he said, "I am"? Was it, do you think, because the light of Jehovah gleamed upon them at least in some degree? Certainly there was a mystic glory shining about him at times, and those who came near him appear to have been arrested by it. I fancy that it was something more than natural eloquence which made the officers return without him to the Pharisees and chief priests who had sent them to take him, while they excused themselves by saying, "Never man spake like this man."

A sort of radiance would shine forth from Christ, in some dim degree, now and then; but, on this occasion, he took off the veil;—

nay, perhaps it would be more correct to say that he lifted just a corner of it, and permitted these three highly-favoured individuals to see what was always there, though usually concealed from their eyes. "We beheld his glory," wrote John. "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty," wrote Peter. They certainly saw the glory which may, I think, have been manifested at other times when Christ was alone; but whether that was so or not, he had a good reason for letting it be seen on this one occasion, and it may be that we shall gather some instruction while we meditate first upon the transfiguration as a whole, and then turn our thoughts specially to the brightness of Christ's transfigured face.

I want you to notice under what circumstances Christ revealed his glory to his three disciples; and my first observation is, that it was in a lone spot. They were on "a high mountain apart." Learn from this, dear friends, that if we would see Jesus in his glory, we must get apart from the multitude. He may come to us, when we are with his people, as he came to the disciples in the upper room; but there was a kind of loneliness and seclusion even there, for the world was shut out, and none were there but his own followers. Our Lord delights to talk to his beloved ones when they are in retirement. Leave the servants at a distance from the sacred meeting-place, even as Abraham did, and go up to the top of the hill alone, or with some specially chosen companion. We who live in London need more solitude,—at least, I mean that we need to find for ourselves more opportunities for solitude than those who live in retired spots. They almost inevitably walk the fields at eventide, and we may hope that, like Isaac, they there have communion with their God. But if we have not any fields to walk in, we must somehow manage to get alone. The best visits from Christ are like the best visits we have from those we love,—not in the busy market, or in the crowded street, but when we are alone with them.

Our blessed Master also, on this occasion, revealed his glory when he was in prayer. Luke says that, "as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering." Prayer is the key of all mysteries. When Christ would, as it were, unlock himself, the casket, so as to let his disciples see his inner glory, he prayed; and this should teach us that, if we would see Christ's glory, we also must pray; and if we would glow with the glory of Christ, we must be much in prayer. These are practical truths,—much more practical than many imagine. We are far too often like Martha, "cumbered about much serving;" we need to be more like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, looking up into his dear face, and listening to his gracious words. The active life will have little power in it if it is not accompanied by much of the contemplative and the prayerful. There must be retirement for private prayer if there is to be true growth in grace.

When our Lord's disciples did see his glory, it was revealed in an amazing light; and this may teach us how truly divine he is, for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." It may also show us how he has come to us as the light;—not in the blackness of darkness, to overwhelm us in despair, and make us sit like the

Egyptians during that darkness which might be felt; but Christ is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" and when we see him, we shall perceive this. The glory which the disciples saw was a light that was perceptible by the eye; and there is about the glory of Jesus a moral, mental, spiritual light which we shall behold when we see him as he is. This will be the main thing that we shall see when we are favoured with a sight of him.

Something is to be learned also from the persons to whom our Lord revealed his glory. They were very few; there were only three of them; and I venture to say that, amongst the saints of God in all ages, there have not been many who have seen our Lord Jesus Christ to the full. Blessed indeed are the eyes that have so seen him, but they are very few. All of us, who have believed in Jesus, have looked unto him, and have been lightened, and have found salvation through him; but, even amongst us, there are some who have missed many of their rightful privileges. They are partially blind, and cannot see afar off; by the grace of God, they will get to heaven all right, but they will have much darkness on the road. There are few of us who so abide in Christ, from day to day, as to see him as distinctly as he is to be seen. I must confess that I envy some saints, whose biographies I have read, who have seen the Lord far better than I have; and I aspire, I hunger, I thirst to see as much of him as can be seen on this side the river of death; why should we not all do so? Eyes are meant to see light, and spiritual eyes are intended to see Christ; and they are never so fully used for their true design as when they are constantly fixed upon him; all lower lights being forgotten, and permitted to burn out, while he becomes the one great Light in which the soul basks and revels. Mark this then, ye multitudes of professors; out of the twelve apostles, only three saw the transfiguration; and what a small proportion were those three to the great company of men and women who at that time were disciples of Jesus!

Yet these three were very special persons. Some say that Peter was one of them because he loved his Master much; that John was another because his Master loved him much; and that James was the third because he was so soon to die, the first of the apostles who should become a martyr for the faith of Jesus Christ. I do not think, however, that is a good distinction to draw, for I should not say that Peter loved Christ more than John did. Peter was open-hearted, bold, enthusiastic. To my mind, there is something very lovable about Peter; and, in my opinion, we need more Peters in the church of the present day. Though they are rash and impulsive, yet there is fire in them, and there is steam in them, so that they keep us going. As for John, you can all see that it was well that the man, whose head was to lie in the bosom of Christ, who was so affectionately to care for the Master's mother, and who was to see his Lord "in the isle that is called Patmos," should behold him once in his glory, that he might recognize him when he again appeared to him. And as for James, we can easily believe that there were special traits of beauty about his character that made

him to be one of those three; his early martyr death, and the fact that he was the brother of John, certainly lift him up to a very high position among the apostles of Christ.

There were three, I suppose, in order that there might not be any question concerning their testimony to the transfiguration. Two or three witnesses were sufficient to establish a case in a court of law. A thing that cannot be proved by three honest men as witnesses, probably cannot be proved by thirty; and if three men join to testify to a lie, probably thirty will not speak the truth.

These three apostles were specially chosen to see Christ in his glory because they were afterwards to behold him in his greatest agony. I cannot imagine what must have been their feelings when they first saw him brighter than the sun, and then beheld him red as the rose with bloody sweat. I know not which sight a man might more desire,—to see Christ robed in light, and brighter than the sun, or to see him crimsoned with his own blood, the very essence of his being poured out in agony for us. "Oh!" said Rutherford, "but was he not bonny when he wore the red shirt of his own blood for you and me?" Oh, the loveliness of an agonizing Saviour! I cannot compare him in these two so strangely differing experiences; one would have needed to see him in both to understand either of them.

These apostles saw their Lord in his glory, and also in his agony; and perhaps somebody here is saying, "Oh! I wish I could be favoured with those two sights. I wish I could, in vision, if not in actual fact, see the Lord Jesus Christ." Dear friend, do not ask for anything of the kind; be content to see him by faith, for that is the only sight that you really need. Recollect also that although Peter saw Christ thus, he yet lived to deny him; and although James and John saw him, they also forsook him and fled with the rest of the apostles. Well did Peter, therefore, set the revelation of Christ in the Scriptures even above the revelation on the mount of transfiguration when he wrote, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

Sacred Scripture, accepted by faith, will give me a better view of Christ than even if—

> "Tabor's glorious steep I climb;"

for—

> "At the too-transporting light,
> Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

Therefore it is better calmly and quietly to see Christ in the Scriptures than to wish to behold him either in his glory or in his agony.

Another thing which we may learn from our Lord Jesus Christ having shown himself to his apostles thus robed in brightness is, that we are scarcely aware of the glory of which the human body is capable. Nobody knows what beauty may surround these bodies of ours; they are only "vile" in certain aspects. You know what a difference there is in the appearance of a man when his face is lighted up, as we say, or when he is sitting still, and a photographer is taking his portrait. The moment the operator begins to take the cap off the camera, the man's soul vanishes, and his true likeness is not there at all. But see him when he is full of animation, when he is speaking upon some delightful theme; his face lights up, and his whole appearance is changed. I have known some persons, who have seemed to me to have a singular brightness upon their face when they have been speaking about Christ; and very often, the faces of the dying are lit up with a wonderful splendour. There is actually, as physicians know, a kind of luminosity that does arise from the human face in certain stages of disease; that is a brightness which is not to be desired, but our flesh is capable of becoming marvellously transformed when it shall please God to make that change in us. We shall ourselves wonder that such bodies as these can become so light, so bright, so ethereal. The body of Christ became so; and we, in our measure, are to be raised in the likeness of his glorious body. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" and this image of the heavenly, which the apostles saw upon the holy mount, is a kind of index to us of the evident possibility of these poor bodies of ours being clothed with supernal splendour.

Now I want to talk to you, though only for a few minutes, about Christ's transfigured face, concerning which our text says, "His face did shine as the sun."

I. First, from this truth we learn that JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME IN HIS GLORY AS HE WAS BEFORE.

He was transfigured, but he was not transformed into another person. Matthew says that "his face did shine as the sun." Then, *his face was the same as it was before.* It was his face that the apostles saw; all the familiar features of his countenance were there, though illumined with supernatural radiance. So, whatever glory may come to Christ in the future it will be the same dear lineaments that will be lit up with heavenly brightness.

And as there was no change of feature, so there was no change of nature. *The transfigured Christ was the same Saviour whom the apostles had known before;* and I like to think that, though now he reigns exalted high, he is, so far as his identity and nature are concerned, the same as he was when here below. Nothing has changed in his heart, or in his purposes, or in his designs towards his people.

Further, when he was glorified, *his disciples were with him,* for Matthew says that he "was transfigured before them." Do not imagine, dear friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ will forget his disciples when he is in his highest glory. No; even then, they will be with him, for this is part of his great intercessory prayer for them, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be

with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Circumstances change some people; they rise in the world, and then they do not know their poor friends and relations; but Christ was not changed in heart by the wondrous transformation which he had undergone in being clothed in light. After the transfiguration he spoke to his disciples with just the same gentle, human, tender tones as before; he laid his hand upon them in the old-fashioned, familiar way, and said, "Arise, and be not afraid;" just as, when walking upon the water, he had said to them, "It is I; be not afraid."

No, dear friends, there was no change in him, for, as I have already reminded you, even when he was thus manifesting his glory, *his talk was concerning his decease at Jerusalem.* There was no swerving from the great object for which he had descended from heaven; and there was no change either in his feelings or in his manner towards his people.

O beloved, have you known Christ here? Then you shall know him hereafter. Have you trusted him on the cross? Then he will not disown you when he wears his many crowns, and sits upon the throne. You shall say, when you see him in the day of his greatest glory, as we sang just now,—

> "This is the Man, th' exalted Man,
> Whom we unseen adore."

Oh, yes! you shall see the nail-prints shine resplendent, and you shall know that he is indeed your old familiar Saviour, who was with you on earth; and now you are to be with him for ever in heaven.

II. Our text also teaches us a second lesson, namely, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST SURPASSES ALL HUMAN EXPRESSION.

We can measure the illuminating power of the gas that we burn; we talk of it as having so many candle-power; but will any gentleman, who is quick at calculations, compute for us the candle-power of the sun? Nay; that is a task he never can accomplish; for the sun has more light than all other lights put together. So far as we are concerned, all the lights that we can make or imagine cannot equal the sun; he is the very source of all the light that floods the world on our brightest days.

So is it with Christ. *He has in him all brightness and glory.* If there be any virtue, if there be any goodness, if there be any excellence, it is all in him. One said of Henry the Eighth that, if the portraits of all the tyrants who ever lived had been lost, they might all be painted again from his one face; and, surely, I may change the expression and say that, if all the beauty, and all the goodness, and all the love, and all the kindness that there ever were among men should be forgotten, it might all be reproduced from the character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We cannot really see the full glory of the sun; some have been blinded by looking at him too intently; and *no mortal eye can gaze upon all the splendours of Christ.* You may see much of him; but there is such a wondrous mystery—such a marvellous excess of glory—about him that, if any man says, "I know him fully," he

proves that he knows him not. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "that I may know him;" yet he had known Christ for many years. I suppose that he knew a great deal more about Christ in the first year of his Christian life than most of us know after twenty or thirty years; yet, after that long period of gracious instruction which the Holy Spirit had given him, he still had to write, as the expression of his most ardent desire, "that I may know him," for he felt that he had not yet comprehended, with all saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

There is an inexpressible glory about my Master; I can never exaggerate in speaking of it. I can never go to any excess in praising him; I can never extol him so much that anyone shall dare truthfully to say to me, "You have said too much in honour of your Lord." No; if all human tongues were eloquent, and all did speak his praise for ever; and if all angelic voices never spake except to laud and magnify him, so glorious is he that the praises of all combined would not rise above the soles of his feet.

III. I gather from our text, in the third place, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS ALL MEANT TO CHEER AND TO ENLIGHTEN.

The light of the sun reveals, and *Christ also reveals much to us.* In his light we see light. He who knows Christ knows God, who is light. The light of the Spirit of God is given to such as know Christ. They have an unction from the Holy One, and they know all things. Christ has brought immortality to light by his appearing. He is indeed a wondrous Revealer.

Christ, like the sun, is also a great Consoler. What comfort the sun brings to us! How sad we should be if we were to lose his light! But, oh! what floods of comfort come streaming down to darkened hearts when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, appears! No lonely watcher on the tower did ever sigh for the dawn as they do who love the Saviour, and have lost his company; and never were hands so heartily clapped with exultation at the light of the sun reappearing in the far North as we clap ours, in a spiritual sense, when Christ manifests himself to us, for he is indeed "the consolation of Israel."

Jesus, also, like the sun, is a great Healer. The Italians say, "Where the sun comes not, the physician will soon come;" but where the sun shines, his beams usually bring at least a measure of health to men. So, where Jesus is, there the sick revive, for healing is found beneath his wings. Thus the face of Jesus is as the rays of the sun, scattering no malicious vapour, no deadly darts of baleful wrath, but only goodness and love. Oh, that we would all look, by faith, upon his blessed face, and receive all the benefits that he is waiting and willing to bestow upon us!

IV. I am obliged to speak very briefly upon each point where one might enlarge almost without end; so I ask you to notice, in the fourth place, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS SUCH THAT IT MAY BE REFLECTED BY US.

Everybody knows that the sun's light can be reflected; we owe much to reflected light. Well, the glory of Christ is such that it

can shine upon you, so that you can see it; and then, afterwards, you can reflect it, and refract it, and send it back upon others. You can give to others something of what Christ has given to you, and this is a very blessed thing. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," in order that we may let that light shine out upon others.

John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Well, now, you can have *grace and truth*, and you can so live that you shall be the means of bringing grace to others, and you can so display the truth that some, who have not yet looked to Jesus, can see something of Jesus reflected in you. Some Christians are very poor reflectors; but when we are as we ought to be, we shall be like that invention you see sometimes for underground rooms, where they try to send some of the daylight down by means of a reflector. The poor people of London are many of them, both literally and spiritually, underground; very little light ever gets to them; so try to be reflectors, to shed the light upon them. Reflectors are not of much use when they get dirty. Unless they are cleaned, they cannot be of much service; and I know some Christians who need a good shower to cleanse them. There are some professors who do not reflect much credit upon their profession, I am sorry to say; and they generally blame the minister when this is the case. I sometimes wish that some of you Christians would be more careful as to what you do, because the blame for your inconsistencies often falls upon me. If I could do you any good by bearing it, I would not mind; but it is not so, you bring discredit upon the name of one who wishes to live to the Lord in the best way he can, and who has quite enough faults of his own without having all those of other people unjustly laid at his door. "Ah!" say the fault-finders; "that is one of Spurgeon's people." Of course they do; and I am blamed for your wrong-doing, although I am not in the least responsible for it. If the sheep go astray because the shepherd has not done his best to keep them from wandering, blame him; but if he has done all he could, and the sheep then stray, so that the dog has to go after them, do not say that the shepherd ought to have the dog set at him. O beloved, do try to reflect the glory of God so that people shall ask, "What makes that man's countenance so bright?" And the answer shall be, "He has set his face so close to the Well-beloved's face that he reflects the light that shines from it."

V. Lastly,—for our time fails us,—we learn that THIS GLORY OF CHRIST WILL SOON BE MORE FULLY DISPLAYED.

In heaven, the glorified face of Jesus is always to be seen, for we are expressly told that "his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face." Their eyes will be specially strengthened so that they can gaze upon it without injury.

"O long-expected day, begin,"—

when we, too, shall be caught up to see that wondrous countenance! Do not your desires often make you feel like a bird that wants to

fly, but cannot, because it is held down by a chain? Then you sing,—

"My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

They who do behold Christ in glory, even from the outermost rank of the saints, are to be envied above all earthly kings and princes. One said to an old saint, "You cannot see God's face, and live." "Then," he replied, "let me see God's face, and die;" and I will be glad enough to die a hundred deaths if I may but see Christ. One hour with Christ in glory will more than make up for a weary lifetime of service, or suffering, or poverty, or persecution. I have often tried to imagine what the first five minutes with Jesus Christ in heaven will be; but I have in vain sought to picture the novelty and freshness of that wondrous time when the soul, filled with amazement, will exclaim, "The half has never been told me." The Queen of Sheba was astonished when she saw all the glory of King Solomon; but he was a mere nobody compared with our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! what will it be to see him?

Now I close with this thought,—*the glorified face of Jesus is also to be revealed here on earth.* In a short time, according to his promise, he will come. I do not know that he is coming to-morrow, but I do not know that he is not coming then. His return may be a thousand years hence,—perhaps, fifty thousand years hence, or it may be before that clock strikes again; but, whenever he comes, he will fulfil his own word, "Surely I come quickly." One thing is certain, he will come again. In like manner as he went up into heaven, he will return in his own proper person, enthroned upon the clouds of heaven, to hold the last assize. And, my hearers, you will be there, every one of you. As surely as you are here, you will be there. When rocks the earth, and shakes the sky, you will be there. When stars are falling like the leaves of autumn, and when heaven and earth shall flee away from his presence, you will be there; and, whether you love him or not, you shall see him, for "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." Are you ready for his appearing? Say not, "It will be a long while before it happens." It may not be; it may be to-night; and if it be a long time, yet he will surely come; and then where will you be? If you live and die without the Saviour, how will you face him? His eyes are as a flaming fire to search you out, and burn into your very soul. Oh, seek his face this very hour! It still shines as the sun. You know that, when you are out of doors, and the sun is shining, you do not ask, "Where is the sun?" Why, my dear man, you cannot help finding out where he is. "Oh, but how can I look at the sun?" My dear man, nobody needs to ask such a question as that; you just open your eyes, and look. It is the simplest thing in the world to look; and so, to look to Jesus, which is faith, is the simplest, easiest thing ever performed by man; and that is why it is so difficult to many people. That is another paradox. If it were really difficult, men would do it; but because it is so easy, they say

they cannot. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" said the servants to Naaman their master; "how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" and so, when the message is, "Look, and live," you, proud gentleman, want to have a much more elaborate system of salvation. You do not like simply to look to Christ, that you may be saved; but if there is a poor soul anywhere, who is willing to have a whole Christ for nothing, he may have him, and have him now. Accept him; and God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XVI. 24—28; AND XVII. 1—13.

Chapter xvi. Verses 24, 25. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

This is the law of self-sacrifice, based on the sacrifice of Christ, and leading up to the complete sacrifice of the redeemed. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. To try to keep ourselves to ourselves, would be acting contrary to the whole spirit of the redemption which Christ has wrought for us; and that is the last thing that any Christian should think of doing.

26—28. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

By which, I suppose he meant that they should see him in his majesty;—that, notwithstanding the cross, they should see something of his crown of glory, as they did when they beheld him after his resurrection, and as they did, even better, when he ascended on high; and as they did, some of them, in vision, when they saw him standing at the right hand of God, even the Father.

Chapter xvii. Verse 1. *And after six days—*

Luke says, "about an eight days after these sayings;" but I suppose he counted the day before and the day after. "After six days,"—and the first day was, probably, the first day of the week, so he was now coming to another Lord's day. One of the high Christian festivals of the life of Christ was about to be celebrated. Jesus was not yet dead, therefore it was not the resurrection that was celebrated on that day, but the transfiguration. "After six days,"—six days' teaching concerning the cross before he revealed his glory. Dear brethren, there are many in these days who delight to speak almost exclusively about the glory of the second advent. Now, God forbid that we should be silent concerning that great theme! But I think our teaching concerning it must be given after six days' consideration of the sufferings of Christ. Let those who will say, "We preach Christ *glorified;*" I mean still to say, with Paul, "But we preach Christ *crucified.*" When I have had my six days for that topic, then am I right glad to have another day to speak concerning Christ's glory. We must never forget his death; all our immortal hopes are centred in the death of our great Substitute. "After six days"—

1, 2. *Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up unto an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

"White and glistering," says Luke; "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them," says Mark.

3. *And, behold,—*

As if this was a great wonder. The transfiguration of Christ could scarcely be called miraculous, for it is according to the nature of Christ that his face should shine, and his very raiment become glorious.

3. *There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

Moses, the great representative of the law, and Elias, the chief of the prophets,—one who had died, and one who had entered heaven without dying,—thus representing both the quick and the dead.

4. *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

If Peter had known that hymn by Dr. Watts,—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss;"—

he would have thought it appropriate to sing at that moment; and whenever we get up on the mount, we have no desire to go down again. Our one thought is, "Oh, that this happy experience would last! Oh, that we might keep in this blessed company for ever!" Yet our highest religious excitements cannot continue, even as the sea is not always at flood tide.

The talk between those three—Jesus, and Moses, and Elias,—must have been well worth hearing. I would like to have been one of the three untransfigured, unglorified apostles, to listen to the conversation of the three glorified ones. We know what they talked about, for Luke tells us that they "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and it is very singular that the Greek word which he used to describe Christ's decease is the word "exodus." They "spake of his exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses knew all about the exodus out of Egypt; and what a type that was of Christ's departure out of this world;—the death of the lamb,—the sprinkling of the blood,—the slaying of the firstborn among the Egyptians, even as Christ smote sin, death, and hell;—the triumphant coming out of Israel, with silver and gold, setting forth Christ's ascension to his Father with all his precious treasures captured from the hand of the enemy.

How changed must the feelings of Elias have been since the day when he said, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away;" for now he was seeing the King in his glory, and talking with him about his approaching departure.

How did Peter, and James, and John know that these two men were Moses and Elias? They had never seen them in the flesh, yet they evidently recognized them; so, as they knew people whom they had not known on earth, I am sure that I shall know in heaven those whom I did know here; I shall have the advantage of them in that respect. I suppose they said to one another, as soon as they saw these men, "That is Moses, and that is Elijah;" yet they had never seen them; and shall not we, when we meet our dear kindred and friends, say at once, "That is So-and-so, with whom I took sweet counsel on earth when we walked to the house of God in company"? Surely, the mutual recognition of the saints hardly needs a better support than this passage supplies.

5. *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them:*

The Shekinah cloud, which was the type of the divine presence in the wilderness,—bright, yet a cloud, softening the excessive glory of the face of Jesus with its overshadowing, yet casting no dimness upon it: "a bright cloud overshadowed them:"

5, 6. *And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.*

We cannot bear for God to come too near us; for we are such frail earthen vessels that, if he reveals his glory too much within us, we are ready to break.

7. *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.*

Ay, it was Jesus only who could give them comfort; and I have to say,—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

The hand of a man touched the apostles, and the voice of a man said to them, "Arise, and be not afraid."

8. *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.*

And they did not want any other man "save Jesus only." Let Moses, and Elijah, and all others go, so long as Christ remains. There will be the most blessed company for us so long as he abides with us.

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?*

"May we not tell the story of what has happened on this mountain? Elias has come. If we publish this news, it may convince even the scribes that thou art the Messiah."

11, 12. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*

How he comes back to that point! Evidently the chief thought in our Saviour's mind was concerning his suffering. On another occasion, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" As the magnetic needle ever points to the pole, so did the heart of Jesus ever point to the cross.

13. *Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*

John had indeed come "in the spirit and power of Elias," yet Herod had put him to death, as other wicked men would deal with his Lord and Master whose way he so gloriously prepared.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—421, 793, 337.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SECRET OF LOVE TO GOD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 9TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 15th, 1880.

"We love him, because he first loved us."—1 John iv. 19.

THIS morning,* those of us who were here meditated upon the connection between faith and love, so I thought we had better pursue the same subject somewhat further, hoping that we might still receive divine instruction upon that important theme.

You must have noticed how continually John blends faith with knowledge and love, as in the sixteenth verse of this chapter: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." All through this Epistle, he constantly repeats the words "we know," "we know," "we know," "we know;" and perhaps even more frequently he uses the word "love." Knowledge, faith, and love are plaited together so closely that they cannot be separated. They are intertwisted and united like the warp and the woof of a fabric, and so they become really one. To know Christ, to trust Christ, to love Christ, these are among the elementary principles of piety. Without all of these graces, there is no true religion; but if these things are in us, and abound, they make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful.

When you notice that knowledge, faith, and love are placed like a set of precious jewels in one casket, it leads you to see how necessary it is that all the powers of our nature should be renewed. Our intellects need to be regenerated, so that we may be able to know Christ, for those who are unspiritual do not know him. They hear about him, but they are strangers to him. Spiritual things are only known to spiritual men. Faith is an act partly of the intellect and partly of the affections, and we must therefore have both head and heart renewed by the Spirit of God, or we shall not have true faith. Even though the mind may be purified, it will not suffice unless the affections also are cleansed, because love to God never comes out of a

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,553, "Faith Working by Love."

foul heart; it is a plant that will not grow on the dunghill of our corrupt nature. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, or else we can never know God, nor trust God, nor love God In fact, it comes to this, as Christ told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again;" there must be a thorough, real, radical change, not of this faculty or that, but of the whole man. He that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and all who come into his kingdom are made new creatures in Christ Jesus just as much as if they had been annihilated, and had been created over again. What a solemn influence this truth should exercise over us! In what a clear light is true religion thus set before us! It is no mere child's play, no matter to be settled offhand, without thought or consideration. Search yourselves, and see whether the Spirit of God has wrought in you the true knowledge, the true faith, and the true love; for, otherwise, whatever you may think you possess of any of these things is not of God.

This short text is one from which I have often preached to you. I notice that there are already three sermons* upon it published in my volumes; and I hope to preach from it a good many more times if I am spared, for it is one of those inexhaustible wells into which you may let down the bucket every morning, and always pull it up full. It is a mine with a good many seams of the richest ore. You may think that you have dug all its treasures out, but you have only to sink a new shaft, to find that there is another seam just as rich as the former one; and when you have brought all that wealth to the surface,—and that may take your whole lifetime,—someone else may sink another shaft, and open up a fresh vein.

I. I shall try to explain the text, first, by showing you that OUR LOVE TO GOD IS A FACT WHICH DESERVES AN AVOWAL.

Is it a fact with you, dear friend, or is it not? Let every one of us answer this question for himself or herself. With some of us, blessed be God, it is a fact that we do love God; and it is a fact that is worth speaking out, and worth writing down. The Holy Spirit himself thought it worth while to move John to write down for himself and for his brethren, "We love him." Some feel that they must honestly confess that they do not love the Lord, and there may be others who are quite indifferent as to whether they love him or not; but there are some who must avow their affection for him. The very stones in the street would cry out against them if they did not confess their love to their Lord; they feel compelled to say, in the face of all the world, "We love him." They do not say it boastingly, for they give the reason why they love him,—"because he first loved us,"—a reason drawn from the grace of God which prevents anything like boasting concerning it. Yet, trustfully, boldly, unhesitatingly, they do say outright, so that whoever will may hear it, "'We love him.' Others may not, but we do; and we gather together as a company of people who are agreed upon this point, 'We love him.' We love God; especially as he is revealed

* See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 229, "Love;" and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,008, "Love's Logic;" and No. 1,299, "Love's Birth and Parentage."

to us in the person of Jesus Christ, his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who loved us, and gave himself for us."

If you ask me, "Why ought this fact to be avowed?" I answer, first, *because there can be no good reason for concealing it.* I cannot imagine a true man saying, "I love Christ, but I do not want others to know that I love him, lest they should laugh at me." That is a reason to be laughed at, or rather, to be wept over. Afraid of being laughed at? O sir, this is indeed a cowardly fear! Are there not some of Christ's servants, who live in the full glare of public observation, and whose names are ridiculed every hour of the day? Yet has that ridicule ever broken their bones, or their hearts? Verily, nay; and if God makes men of us, we ought never to be afraid of such a thing as a sneer, or a jeer, or a jest on account of our religion.

Perhaps some will say that they do love Christ; but that, if they avowed their affection for him, they would provoke opposition. Of course you would; did not God himself say so to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed"? Did you expect the woman's seed to be loving the Lord, and yet not to be opposed by the serpent's seed? Did not Jesus say to his disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"? You know how the world treated him; and shall the disciple be above his Master, the servant above his Lord?

So, my brethren, if you do love the Lord, say, "We love him," for there is no good reason why you should not avow your affection for him; but, on the other hand, there is abundant reason why you should do so; for, first, *Jesus Christ deserves and claims that avowal.* He was not ashamed of his love for us. He left all the glories of heaven that he might espouse our cause; and when we came to his feet, burdened, and guilty, and full of woes, there was not one lovely trait in our character to attract him toward us; yet he took pity upon us, and loved us, and saved us; and now he pleads for us in heaven. He is not ashamed to call us brethren; so, surely, we ought, bravely and joyfully, to declare that we are on his side.

We ought not to need any urging to that avowal; but if we do, let us remember that Christ claims it, for he has said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he also said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me"—and the apposition, you see, makes that word "deny" mean "he that does not confess me"—"he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Come, then, brothers and sisters, since Christ claims it, and so richly deserves it, let the avowal of this fact be made, if fact it be, "We love him."

It ought to be made, also, *because it puts us among most blessed company.* I wish I had the tongue of the eloquent, so that I could depict for you that great cloud of witnesses up on high who, with

one voice, exclaim, "We love him." If I ask all who are in heaven, "Who among you loves Jesus Christ?" I seem at once to hear a response, like Niagara in volume, but sweeter far in sound, "We love him;" and above all human and angelic voices, comes the declaration, of the eternal Father, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Look through all the pages of history, and put to the noblest men and women, who seem still to live, this question, "Who loves Christ?" and, at once, up from dark dungeons and cruel racks there rises the confessors' cry, "We love him;" and from the fiery stake, where they clapped their hands as they were being burned to death, the same answer comes, "We love him." If you could walk through the miles of catacombs at Rome, and if the holy dead, whose dust lies there, could suddenly wake up, they would all shout, "We love him." The best and bravest of men, the noblest and purest of women, have all been in this glorious company; so, surely, you are not ashamed to come forward, and say, "Put my name down among them. Though meanest of them all, I wish that 'we' might comprehend me, and my children, and my friends, that we all might be able truthfully to say, 'We love him.'" Happy are they who enlist in such an army as this, which has emblazoned on its banners this grand declaration, "We love him."

Further, dear friends, if you do love the Lord, confess that fact, *because your avowal may influence others.* It may be that some, who do not yet love him, will be constrained to do so when they hear you say, "We love him." Many a child has learnt to love Christ through his parents' godly example; and many a stranger to true religion has been induced to yield his heart to Jesus by seeing the loving behaviour of those who were Christ's disciples. So, for this poor world's sake, confess your love to your Lord. Perhaps you will never be a preacher, and you need not wish to be one unless you are divinely called to the office; but you can at least be a confessor of Christ; and, by that avowal, and by living consistently with it, you will draw your one or two to the Saviour, in whose sight every soul is precious beyond all value.

Besides, *it may be a great blessing to yourself* to avow your love to Christ. I always look back, with deep gratitude, to the day in which I was baptized. You know that we baptize none but those who profess to have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, so it is absolutely certain that we attribute no saving efficacy to baptism in water; yet, at the same time, we have proved, again and again, that there is a distinct blessing in the observance of the ordinance. It was so in my case; up to that time, I was timorous and trembling, and afraid to confess Christ; but after I went into the river, and was publicly baptized into his death, I lost all fear of man, and I think I can honestly say that I have never been ashamed to own my Lord from that day to this. That coming out boldly for Christ was like crossing the Rubicon, or burning the boats; no retreat was possible after that, nor have I ever wanted to go back to the world from which I then came out. The world has had many an ill word for me from that day to this, and there is no love

lost between us; I have done with the world as the world has done with me; I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me. And you Christian people will find it good when you also can say, "We have come right out from the world, and we love Christ." Perhaps somebody says, "I should not be admitted into society if I were to confess Christ." Society? Humph!

> "In such society as this
> My weary soul would rest:
> The man that dwells where Jesus is,
> Must be for ever bless'd."

Be out-and-out for him; unfurl your colours, never hide them, but nail them to the mast, and say to all who ridicule the saints, "If you have any ill words for the followers of Christ, pour them out upon me. If you call us canting hypocrites, Presbyterians, Methodists,—say what you like about us, I am quite prepared to bear my share of your slander, I will even glory in it, if so it must be; but know this,—ye shall hear it whether ye like it or not,—'I love Christ;' and amongst the people, whose names are written down as lovers of the Lord, my name shall stand, unworthy though I am of such an honour." This is a fact which deserves avowal, and I should rejoice if I could induce some of you, who have never made that avowal, to join yourselves openly with the people of God in our Lord's appointed way.

II. Now we will take the text in another way, and note, secondly, that OUR LOVE IS AN EFFECT FLOWING FROM A CAUSE: "We love him, *because* he first loved us."

And, first, *it is not the result of effort.* We do not love God because we tried to do so; true love cannot come in that way. You may say, "I intend to think," and you may succeed in doing it; but you cannot act like that with regard to love. Oh, no! love is not a slave, to be at any man's beck and call; it is a master; and when even the lowest form of love comes upon a man, it carries him right away wherever it will. So, this highest type of human love—our love to God—overmasters us; it is never the result of effort on our part. Did you ever hear a mother say, "I will try to love my child"? I do not know how she would go to work to bring about such a state of things as that. Oh, no! she loves her child naturally, she cannot help loving her own offspring. I never tried to love my sons; I cannot help loving them; my love to them is not the effect of any effort on my part. It is as free as the dew that drops from heaven; we may not know how it comes, but we know that we have not made it.

Nor is love to God produced in any heart *as a matter of duty.* We love God, not because we felt that we ought to love him, but "because he first loved us." A sense of duty is a very proper thing concerning many matters, and I do not deny that it is our duty to love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, for this is the very essence of the law of the Lord; but no man ever does love as a mere matter of duty. You love even an earthly object because you cannot help yourself, and you love God because he is infinitely lovely, and because he has so completely won your

heart as to engross your whole affection. Because he first loved us, and that love of his has been shed abroad in our hearts, we have loved him in return as a matter of course, we could not help doing so. The mighty deeps of his immeasurable love, high up on the eternal hills, flow down into the inmost recesses of our empty hearts; and when, afterwards, a fountain of love is seen springing up out of them, the secret of its action is to be traced to that great reservoir away up on the everlasting hills.

So our love to God is not the result of effort, nor does it arise from a sense of duty; but *it comes by knowledge and faith.* As John says, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." We have been informed, by a revelation in this Book, which we accept as infallible, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We have believed in him; that is, we have trusted him; we know, therefore, that we shall not perish, but that we have everlasting life; and now we love God for having bestowed upon us the priceless gift of his dear Son to redeem us from death and destruction.

Further, *the cause of our love to God abundantly justifies it.* People say that "love is blind;" but, in this case, the eyes of love are wide-open and far-seeing. Love can look the Saviour in the face, and point to his beauties, which fully justify all its admiration of him, and devotion to him. We read the story of Christ,—of his unique life in human flesh, and his sacrificial death for our sins, and we say that, if we did not love him, we should be of all men the most ungrateful. As he has laid down his life for us, and as he still lives to carry on the work of our salvation, as he has loved us from before the foundation of the world, and will love us when this world has passed away, we must love him. It is wasting words to argue over this matter; there is, in the natural and proper order of things, an absolute necessity that such a love as Christ's is should have the supreme affection of our hearts in return.

We feel, also, that *such a cause is capable of producing a far larger result than we have ever experienced yet.* "Because he first loved us," we expect to love him much more than we do at present; and we believe that, if we loved him so much that men called us fanatics, we should be perfectly justified; and that, if our heart were all taken up with him,—if we lived for nothing else but to serve him,—if we had not a breath or a pulse that was not devoted to him,—if we laid down our lives for him; yea, if we had ten thousand lives, and laid them all down for him,—we think that such love as that which he spontaneously showed to us when we were his enemies would perfectly justify us for doing all that, and ten thousand times more if it were possible.

See you, then, dear brethren and sisters, that our love to our Lord Jesus Christ is an effect produced by a great cause, namely, his eternal love to us. Oh, if you do really believe that he has loved you so, sit down, and turn the subject over in your mind, and say to yourself, "Jesus loves me; Jesus chose me; Jesus redeemed me; Jesus called me; Jesus has pardoned me; Jesus has taken me

into union with himself. Jesus has made me to be a part of the bride, the Lamb's wife; I shall be one with him for ever. He will put a crown upon my head, and I shall sit with him upon his throne; and this may happen within a week, perhaps I shall spend next Sabbath seeing him face to face." With such a hope as this, you must love him, must you not? Can your hearts resist his charms?

"Hard is the heart that does not feel
Some sweet affection move,"—

whenever the love of Christ is proclaimed. Yet we must not try to make ourselves love our Lord, but look to Christ's love first, for his love to us will beget in us love to him. I know that some of you are greatly distressed because you cannot love Christ as much as you would like to do, and you keep on fretting because it is so. Now, just forget your own love to him, and think of his great love to you; and then, immediately, your love will come to something more like that which you would desire it to be.

III. But now, thirdly,—and I must speak but briefly upon each point,—OUR LOVE IS A SIMPLICITY FOUNDED UPON A MYSTERY. "We love him." That is simple enough. "Because he first loved us." Ah! there is a great mystery which none of us can fully understand.

I say that our love to Christ is a simplicity, and I want you to keep it so, because *some people treat it metaphysically*. Now, what is love? Will somebody give us a clear definition of it. Yes; now will somebody else give us another? By the time that we have two or three hundred definitions of love, and put them all together, it is very probable that we shall have lost all idea of what love really is. It is delight, it is complacency, it is longing for association; it is—well, you know what it is, do you not?—for if not, I cannot tell you what it is. We get into the region of metaphysics when we begin to talk about love, and there we lose ourselves; and I have known people try to describe what love to Christ is, and, very soon, they have gone down in that sea. They could not explain it, for it does not go to be explained.

Sometimes, I meet with persons in trouble of this sort. One says, "I read that I ought to love Christ with a disinterested love. Does not Francis Xavier say,—

"'Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward,'—

"and so on,—teaching us that we ought to love Christ simply for his own sake?" Yes, I know that is his teaching, and that many holy men have thought they kept to that, and I daresay they have; but I also know that love may be perfectly genuine, and yet be as far as possible from being disinterested. For instance, do you doubt the reality of the love of that little babe to its mother? No; if there is love anywhere, it is in that tiny child towards its parent. But is that love disinterested? Certainly not. Is not the love of dear kind children to their father and mother true love, and very

sweet love, too? Of course it is, and we delight in it; but is it disinterested? No; they love us because, for years, they have received kindnesses at our hands, and they expect we shall treat them in the same fashion in the future; and I think that you and I will never be able to talk about being disinterested in our love to God when the very breath we breathe is his gift, his daily mercy supplies us with food, and we are clothed and cared for by his love. We are debtors, so deeply drowned in obligation to him, that we must leave off talking about being disinterested. Why, we are always receiving something or other from our God, and so we shall be till we die. We are beggars at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, receiving daily alms from Christ; and, inasmuch as John, who was, perhaps, the noblest of all the saints, only got so far as to say, "We love him, because he first loved us," I am quite satisfied if I can get as far as John did; and if you cannot say any more than that, you may be well content if you can join with John and the rest of the disciples of Christ in saying, "We love him, because he first loved us." Do not trouble yourself about the metaphysical distinctions which some try to draw. If you do love Christ, it is a simple thing, though you may not be able to explain it to others, or even to yourself.

Further, *you must not always expect to display that love to the same extent.* We are sometimes very foolish about that matter. You have an intense affection for your child, but you are busy all day long in your shop or your warehouse, and, perhaps, throughout the whole day, not one thought of your boy has crossed your mind. Does anybody say that you do not love him? No; your love was just as true as ever, but there were other things that claimed your attention. Possibly, you are away on a long journey; and, one evening, as you are sitting down to rest, there comes a letter from your child, and as you read it, you say, "Bless his little heart, I wish I had him on my knee at this moment." Something has come, you see, to awaken the love that was there all the while, for true love in our heart is often like the partridge or the pheasant in the shooting time. When somebody comes near, up they go; yes, but they were there before; they would not have flown up if they had not been under cover. So, often, do the graces of Christians hide themselves away for a time till the occasion for their display arises; and, then, up they start, but they would not have started up if they had not been there. We were singing, a few minutes ago,—

"If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Well, if you meant it then, you will still love him to-morrow, when your hands are busily occupied at your toilsome task, or your brain is counting up the long rows of figures which make your eyes ache, or you have to wait upon so many customers that you get utterly weary. You may not be able to be always thinking about divine subjects; but if your heart is right, your love to your Lord is there all the while. We cannot always tell, during the day, where the rooks live, for they fly all over the fields; but, at night, we see which way they go to where their nests are built in the old rookery

So, your thoughts may fly hither and thither during the day; but when you get home, they come back to your blessed Lord and Master. That is where the home of your heart is, for when it gets the opportunity,—when it is let go, as the apostles were, it goes to its own company. So may it always be with you, beloved!

But *our love to Christ*, though it is, in itself, a simplicity, *is based upon a great mystery*. The mystery is, that he should ever have loved us at all. Can anybody tell us how it was that Christ ever began to love us? I sometimes fancy that I could explain why Jesus Christ loved some of you; but I cannot make out why he ever loved me; that is a matter which I must leave until I see him; but I suppose it was because he would do it, because his own sovereign will so determined. Certainly, I cannot conceive of any other cause; and if any of you ever think that you were saved because you were better than other people, or that you owe the first advances towards being saved to your own free will,—well, I am glad if there are any such good people about, but I know that it was not so with me; and I think that the most of God's people will say, "No, no, no, no; if there is any difference between us and others, it is the grace of God that has made it, so let him have all the glory of it." There is a difference between some of us and others whom we know, and whoever made it ought to have the crown for it. If you made it yourself, brother, you can claim the crown; but I know that you will not do that if you are really a lover of the Lord, but that you will cry with us, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." So I conclude that we are all agreed that the difference between us, and our former selves, and our old companions, is one which sovereign grace has made, and that this is a great mystery, although our love in return for it is a simplicity.

IV. I can only give you just a few sentences upon our last point, which is this,—OUR LOVE IS A FORCE SUSTAINED BY A HIGHER FORCE.

Our love is a force. If you truly love God, you feel it to be so. *It is a force that comforts and emboldens us.* Out of love to God, we feel that we can even dare the devil to do his worst against us. When love fills us to the full, it makes us courageous.

Love to God also constrains us. With the apostle Paul, we cry, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Because of this love, we often do things which we would never have chosen to do of ourselves, and we leave undone the things we should once have liked to do. "Love is strong as death;" and when once it gets full possession of a man, you know how completely it will carry him away; and love to God is indeed a mighty force, of which, perhaps, we have not any of us proved the full power as yet.

But *it is a force which is kept up by a higher force*,—namely, the love of God to us. What a force that is! Who can ever estimate its power? The love of God to men was so strong that, when death and hell strove against it, they were driven away like chaff before the wind. All our sins stood, like a mighty mountain, barring our way to God; but his love levelled every hill, and made a plain path by which we might approach his mercy-seat. The love

of God to his people is omnipotent; there is no force in nature that can for a single moment be compared with it. It is irresistible, for the love of God conquered God himself, and brought him down to earth in human form,—

"First, in our mortal flesh, to serve;
Then, in that flesh, to die."

"Found guilty of excess of love," our Saviour was put to death that he might redeem us. He could lose his life for us, but he could not lose his love to us. O mighty force! Then, do you not see, brethren, if there is such a force as this to draw upon, that the love of God, when it is shed abroad in our hearts, can give our love a greater force than it has ever had? With that greater force, there can be put into our lives an energy which we have never known. It is possible for us to rise to something far higher than our past poor little selves; we can do something more than we have ever dreamed of doing; and God can use us to perform nobler deeds of self-denial, to rise to greater heights of daring, and to stoop to deeper depths of humiliation than we have ever yet ventured on. Strong Son of God, immortal love, nor pain, nor grief, nor bloody sweat, nor death itself, could stay thee; and, by thy sacred passion, we implore thee to let thy love drop into our souls till we too shall become strong, like thyself, according to our measure, and shall be able to contend for thee, to suffer for thee, to live for thee, and to die for thee, all the while giving this as the explanation of it all, "We love him, because he first loved us"! God bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 JOHN IV.

Verse 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit,—*

A simpleton believes every word that he hears, but "the wise man's eyes are in his head," so he examines what he sees and hears, and does not blindly accept whatever may be told to him. So John says, "Believe not every spirit,"—

1—3. *But try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:*

If there is any question raised about the Deity and the humanity of Christ, do not listen any longer. When you taste the first morsel of meat from a joint, and you find that it is tainted, there is no necessity for you to eat all the rest to see if it is good; and if any man questions the true Divinity and the real humanity of Christ, have nothing to do with him, and give no heed to what he says, for he "is not of God."

3, 4. *And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children,*

Ye who are trusting in Jesus, and are born again of his Spirit, though you may have only a small influence with others, and are but as little children in your own esteem, yet "ye are of God."

4. *And have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

There are two spirits; the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and the evil spirit dwells in the ungodly. But the Holy Spirit is stronger than the evil spirit, and will certainly overcome him.

5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

When people say to you, "Everybody says so-and-so," that is not the reason why you should believe it. "All the men of advanced thought—all the scholars of the age, speak thus;" yes, just so: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

6. *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*

The apostles spake as men sent from God, for the Spirit of God dwelt in them; and they alone know the truth who keep to that which has been revealed to us through his holy apostles and prophets.

6, 7. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

From the abundance of love which was in John's heart, we might almost be startled at the very strong things that he writes against those who are in error, did we not remember that it is only a false charity which winks at error. He is the most loving man who has honesty enough to tell the truth, and to speak out boldly against falsehood. It is very easy to pass through this world believing and saying that everybody is right. That is the way to make a soft path for your own feet, and to show that you only have love to yourself; but sometimes to speak as John the Baptist spoke, or as Martin Luther spoke, is the way to prove that you have true love to others.

8—10. *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

By nature, we had no love to God; we were his enemies. We loved sin, and we had ruined ourselves by it; but God took out of his own bosom the only Son he had, that he might make reconciliation for us, and put away our sin. "Herein is love," says the apostle, as though you could find it nowhere else as it is here. Here is the height and depth of love immeasurable; here is love summed up, here is love's climax: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

If such was his great kindness toward us that he denied himself his own Son for our sake, ought we not to be kindly affectioned one toward another?

12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

"God dwelleth in us" though we do not see him. The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.

13, 14. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

John is speaking for himself and the rest of the apostles; for they were eye-witnesses who had seen Christ, and therefore could testify to him.

15, 16. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Is there anyone here who is full of anger, enmity, malice, and envy? If so, let him know that God dwells not in the heart that harbours such abominations. Until these base passions are expelled, and we feel love to all mankind for Christ's sake, God is not in us, for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The old method, according to Jewish tradition, was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;" but Christ's new rule is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." This is the point in which our likeness to God will be seen, for he loved us when we were his enemies, and he expects his children to love their enemies; may he graciously teach us that sacred art!

17. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

If we can be to the world, in our poor feeble measure, what God is to it,—fountains of love, dispensaries of goodness,—then we need not be afraid of the verdict even of the great day of judgment.

18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:*

If a man is conscious that he intends no harm to anyone, that he wishes good to all mankind, that he loves his God, and loves his fellow-men for God's sake, what has he to fear? He becomes the bravest of the brave, and often finds himself safe and unharmed in places where others dare not go.

18—20. *Because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:*

John! John! John! This is a very strong expression. Did we not always understand that John was full of affection? Yes, but he was not one of those oily, sugary sort of people who cannot speak the truth. There is no real love in that kind of man; he has only the mere pretence of love. John speaks sharply because he loves ardently. True love hates that which is unlovely. It is inevitable that a man, who is full of love, should feel intense indignation against that which is contrary to love. Hence the apostle says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

20, 21. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

And the word "brother" is to be understood in the widest possible sense. We are all brothers, springing from the same common parent; and therefore we ought to be philanthropists, lovers of man, loving even the guilty and the worthless, having an earnest desire to do good even to those who do us ill. If we have not yet reached that spirit, we had need begin our true Christian life, at the foot of the cross, by trusting and loving him who there died out of love for sinners; for there only can we learn, in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord, this divine philosophy of love to God and men.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—259, 248, 804.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BRINGING SINNERS TO THE SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 16TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 22nd, 1880.

"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming."—Mark ix. 17—20.

I DO not intend to speak so much upon the whole of this text as to use the latter part of it as a sort of motto for an appeal to Christian people to be diligent in the service of their Lord. If we wish to do good to our fellow-creatures, the best thing that we can do for them is to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the feet of Jesus we ourselves obtained salvation if we are saved; we never had any true peace of heart until we came to Christ, and we never should have had any if we had remained apart from him. The great Physician, who healed our soul-sickness, was Christ Jesus the Lord; and if we are to be the means of blessing to the sons of men, we must recommend to them the Physician whom we have proved to be so exceedingly useful to ourselves. They cannot be blessed, any more than we could be, until they are brought to Jesus.

When any of us desire to be of service to others, it is well for us to learn the best way of setting about our task; for if we do not know how to go to work, all our earnestness may be expended upon that which is useless; but when we understand what we are at, and concentrate all our powers upon wise and proper efforts, then are we likely to succeed. To my mind, the first thing that we have to strive after, in the name of God, and by the help of the Holy Ghost, is to bring men to Jesus Christ; and God forbid that we should ever lift even a finger to point them anywhere else for salvation. Each true believer, as well as every Christian minister, should say,—

"'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

We are to point sinners to Jesus,—ourselves looking at him all the while, and praying that they also may look unto him, and live.

I think I need hardly remind you that every Christian is bound to give himself to the blessed work of bringing sinners to the Saviour. Common humanity should lead us to attempt this task. Is it necessary for me to bid you love your fellows, and seek their good? Why, even they who have no Christianity are often exceedingly generous, and humane, and kind. Some persons whose religious opinions are full of error, have, nevertheless, manifested great tenderness and sympathy towards the sick, and the suffering, and the poor; and they have set a noble example of what others might do for the needy. Much more, then, ought the followers of the loving Christ to have tender, sympathetic hearts, and anxiously to desire to do the most they can for their fellow-men. I shall take it for granted, my dear hearers, that you, who are members of this church, or of any other true Christian church, are desirous to be the means of blessing to those who are about you, and that you also believe that the surest way to bless them is to bring them to Christ.

I. So, coming to our text, I begin by remarking that PARENTS ARE THE FIRST PERSONS WHO SHOULD LABOUR TO BRING THEIR CHILDREN TO CHRIST.

In the 17th verse, we read that *the epileptic youth was, in a sense, brought to Christ by his father.* "Master," said the poor man, "I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit." He hardly knew how to set to work, for he somehow confounded Christ with his disciples; so, as the Lord Jesus was away upon the mountain, he brought his son to the disciples. They could not cast out the devil, yet it was a right thing, on the part of the father, to bring his child to them; it showed a loving spirit, and a desire to see him cured. I am afraid there are some fathers, who even call themselves Christians, who have not yet done as much for their sons and daughters as that father did for his boy, for they have not asked for the sympathy and help of Christian people on behalf of their own children. I am utterly ashamed of some professors of religion who say that they really must leave that matter to their children. I have heard of one man who said that he did not like to prejudice his boy, so he would not say anything to him about religion. The devil, however, was quite willing to prejudice the lad, so very early in life he learnt to swear, although his father had a foolish and wicked objection to teaching him to pray. If you ever feel it incumbent upon you not to prejudice a piece of ground by sowing good seed in it, you may rest assured that the weeds will not imitate your impartiality, but they will take possession of the land in a very sad and shocking manner. Where the plough does not go, and the seed is not sown, the weeds are quite sure to multiply; and if children are left untutored and untrained, all sorts of evils will spring up in their hearts and lives.

If a professedly Christian parent has not even put his children under godly tuition, what shall I say of him? He must be a Christian watered down to a very low point, or beaten out to

extreme thinness. There must be very little, if any, grace left in such a man as that. We have known wealthy Christian men send their boys to school where the whole influence was altogether against religion, or else utterly neutral. Girls have sometimes been sent abroad, to learn a foreign language in the midst of those who are steeped in gross error; and it does not seem to have occurred to the parents that they ought first to have cared about the souls of their daughters. Oh, dear me! are such people as these worthy to be called Christians at all; or do they merely wear the Christian label upon their breasts without having the grace of God in their hearts? Dear brother or sister, if you cannot speak to your own children altogether as you can wish about their souls, do follow the example of this man, and bring your dear ones to the disciples, that they may see what they can do for them in the Master's name. Still, recollect that there was a mistake in this father's action, because, at first, he made the disciples the terminus of his journey instead of merely coming to them *en route* to Christ. We may make Christian men the way by which we try to get to Christ; but to stop at them, and not to bring the children to Christ himself, will be fatal to all our desire for the salvation of their souls.

This man did not see his child cured by the disciples, *yet he persevered after his first failure.* "Master," said he, "I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit. . . I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." In effect, he said, "They have failed, so I have brought him to thee." So, if the Sabbath-school teacher has not been blessed to your girl,—if the instruction in that Bible-class, to which she has gone for years, has not been the means of her conversion,—if your boy after having had the best religious training, remains unsaved, go straight away to the great Master in your earnest prayers, and so bring your dear children to Christ. I am not a believer in the theory that some hold,—that children do not grow up in the fear of God if they have been trained in it. It is true that there have been many ministers' sons who have been ungodly young men, I have had very sad proof of that fact; yet I fear that some of those ministers may have neglected their own families while they were preaching to others. It is very easy for a man—especially if his wife does not help him to train their children aright,—to neglect the affairs of his own family while he is continually busy about the work of the church; and thus they are not trained up in the way they should go. I wish that this evil was not so common as it is; but I do know that some have grown up ungodly because there was not due attention paid to them. The vineyard at home was neglected while other people's vineyards were being kept.

If you have no family prayer, and your children do not grow up to be Christians, how can you expect that they will? If there is no altar in the house, is it right to call it God's house at all? Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he built an altar too; and that is the custom of all those who live near to God, they sanctify their dwellings with daily prayer and praise; but if that practice

is neglected, and the father keeps his religion in the background, and does not let it be seen at home, I do not marvel if his boys and girls grow up to say that there is nothing in it. It is a sad thing when children can say, "Father made a profession of religion, but his life was not consistent with it. Mother also professed to be a Christian, but we never heard her speak of Christ. She never prayed with us, or, in our hearing, for us." Where no influence is used, it is not probable that there can be any result. I told you, the other night, of a dear brother who said, when I exhorted my hearers to select somebody to pray for, that he had prayed for one person for twenty years, and that he is not converted yet. So I said to him, "Have you spoken to your friend personally about his soul? Have you made it your business to go down to his house, and tell him that you are anxious about him?" "No," he replied, "I cannot say that I have done so." "Well, then," I asked, "do you expect God to hear prayers of that kind? Suppose I were to pray that it might be a good harvest over in that field, and yet, for twenty years, I did not sow any corn there; the probability is that, when I did sow some, I should get my prayers answered, and gather in the harvest." If we pray for anything, God expects us to use the proper means of obtaining it; and if we neglect the means, we have no right to expect him to believe in the sincerity of our prayer. If a father and mother pray for their children, but never pray with them, or speak to them personally about the welfare of their souls, they must not wonder if they are not brought to Christ.

II. But, secondly, although parents should be the first persons to bring their children to Christ, WE MAY, EACH ONE OF US, HELP IN THIS BLESSED WORK. Our text says, "*They* brought him unto him;" that is, the disciples helped the father to bring this poor epileptic child to Jesus.

In seeking to bring sinners to the Saviour, we shall find that *some are brought to him by almost unconscious influence.* I believe that, when a man is full of the grace of God, he is like a Leyden jar that is charged with electricity; if he possesses true holiness, he will give some of it to others almost without knowing that he is doing so. I have met with many singular instances of that indirect way of doing good. Some three or four months ago, there was a working man, whose wife, being suddenly taken ill, needed a certain Christian woman to come and attend her. The husband went to her house to try to find her. It was on the Sabbath evening, so she was where she ought to be at that time, in the house of God, in a little chapel not many miles from here. The man knew that he must have this good woman to go to his wife, so he went to the chapel, and as he could not get her at once, he waited for a few minutes, and listened to the preacher. He was interested in what he heard, so he went to that chapel again the next Sabbath morning. Before long, he was brought to know the Lord, and now he has joined the church, and by his earnest work is a great help to the minister. Well, now, if that good woman had not been a Christian, she might not have been in that chapel. If

she had not been a regular attendant on the means of grace, she would not have been there, and the man would not have had to go to the place where he found blessing to his soul. I know of another case that may seem equally strange. A man and his wife went to live in a certain street where nobody, to their knowledge, attended any place of worship. It is dreadful to think that, in London, you may go into street after street where a person, who goes to either a church or a meeting-house, is quite an exception to the general rule; it is sad that it should be so, but so it certainly is. These two people regularly went to a place of worship, and it happened there was living in the same street a man who, when he resided in the country, was a regular attendant on the means of grace; and, as these people went by his window, Sunday after Sunday, although they did not know him, and never said a word to him, and were even quite unconscious of their influence over him, they were preaching to him by their action, for it rebuked him, and he said to himself, "What would my mother think if she knew how I spend my Sabbath days? There are two good people, who are just like my father and mother at home, who, about this time, are going to the meeting-house." He brushed himself up for the evening service, found his way to the house of God, and soon became a Christian.

When you are doing anything that is right, you cannot tell how much blessing you are scattering. Any man or woman, a master or a servant, may be of essential service in bringing others to Jesus, simply by a happy, cheerful, kind, gentle behaviour. You may not have the opportunity of saying much for Christ; perhaps it might not be proper in your position that you should do so; but those about you watch you, they note your genial spirit, and they begin to like you. They observe your consideration for others, and they admire it; then they see your cheerfulness, and they wonder what is the secret of it. Possibly, you are ill, and someone comes to visit you; you are very patient, you even sing in the midst of your pain. Persons who see and hear you, and who note how you bear it all, say to themselves, "There is something within these people that we do not understand;" and thus you exercise an influence over them although you may have said very little to them. The fact that you are a Christian is one of the most practical and powerful means of bringing others to enquire what this religion is which elevates, sweetens, softens, and yet strengthens, and makes people to be manifestly like their Father in heaven.

I remember hearing Mr. Jay, of Bath, tell the story of a good girl, a servant, who attended his meeting-house. Her master and mistress were very strict Church-people, and when they found out that Jane went to the meeting-house, they talked to her very roughly, and said that she must give up going there. She answered very gently, that she must go where her own soul was fed, and she could not meet their wishes in that matter, though she was willing to do so in everything else. "Very well, Jane," they replied; "then you must take a month's notice, for we cannot have any of these horrible Dissenters living with us." That evening,

as the lady and gentleman sat talking together, one of them said, "She is really a good girl, do you not think we are treating her very badly? Suppose she were to insist that we should go to the meeting-house with her, we should say that it was very wrong for her to tyrannize over us, so is it not wrong for us to try to tyrannize over her?" "She took it so gently, too," said the other; "we should not have stood it as she did. Suppose we go and see what this Mr. Jay is like whom she goes to hear; for if he is a good man, she may as well go to the meeting-house as to the church." They went; and, in telling the story, Mr. Jay said, "they have continued to come and hear Mr. Jay up to the present time." So, you see, that the servant had, by her consistent Christian character, brought her master and mistress round to her way of thinking, although they could not coerce her to theirs; and you can judge what influence you also may exert over others if you have the grace of God abounding in you. May God fill us full of it, that we may be the means of bringing many sinners to the Saviour! Yet we must not be content with unconscious influence; and I hope none of us will be like the young gentleman, who advertised that he would like board and lodging where his Christian example would be considered to be an equivalent for what he received.

In many instances, much good has been done in bringing souls to Christ *by casual seed-sowing*. Eternity alone will disclose the good results that have sometimes followed from the utterance of one short word. I trace all the light I have upon a certain subject to a remark made by the usher in a school where I was many years ago; he was teaching geography, and he let drop a sentence, which I need not repeat, but I remember it to this day, and it had an influence upon my whole after career and character. I also recollect a few gracious words that were spoken to me by a godly old woman, who used to read her *Gospel Herald*, and talk to me about the power of divine grace. I rejoiced to get a grip of the grand old Calvinistic doctrine, very much through half a dozen sentences that fell from the lips of that poor, humble, Christian woman, whom it was my great happiness to help, in later years, when she was in poverty. I felt that I owed so much to her that I must do anything I could to comfort her. You will often prove that, as George Herbert says,—

"A verse may find him who a sermon flies,"—

and that a short sentence may strike and stick where a long address may altogether fall flat. Give away a tract whenever you can; better still, give a little book that will not be torn up, one that has a cover on it, for you will probably see it upon the table when you call again. Speak a word for the Master whenever it is possible; and offer a short prayer at every convenient opportunity. I think we should make it a rule, whenever we hear a foul or blasphemous word in the street,—(and, alas! we constantly do so,)—always to pray for the person who utters it. Perhaps then the devil might find it expedient not to stir up people to swear, if he knew that it excited Christians to pray. Try it, at all events, and see whether

it may not have a subtle power to stop the profanity which is so terribly on the increase.

Over and above all this indirect service, there ought to be *direct effort, made by all Christians, for the conversion of those around them.* Try what you can each one do by personally addressing other people. I have heard of one, an utter stranger to religion, who was brought to Christ through a gentleman tapping him on the shoulder, and saying to him, "Well, my brother, how does your soul prosper to-day?" The one, to whom he spoke, turned round, having never heard such a question before, and the other, as he saw his face, exclaimed, "I beg a thousand pardons; I thought you were my old friend So-and-so, who has been in the habit of putting that question to me." It was a mistake, but it was a very blessed mistake, for the Spirit of God used it to the awakening of a conscience that was lying dormant; an honest conscience, which only needed to be aroused by some such startling enquiry as that. Dear friends, do try to speak personally to some friends about their immortal souls. I know that it is not easy work for some of you to break the ice, and make a beginning in such service; but I can assure you that you will do it better and better the more often you attempt it.

Beside that, bring people to the means of grace definitely with a view to their conversion. Help me all you can in trying to preach to the people. Get any, in whom you are concerned, to come to the house of God. A young man, who grew up to be a most useful minister of Christ, had been entirely careless about divine things until a neighbour said to him, "I have a sitting in the Tabernacle; if you will come with me, you can use my ticket." The friend, who made that kind suggestion, stood, all the service through, where he could see the young man, and he was earnestly praying for him all the while. The result of lending his seat, on that one occasion, was that the young man was brought to the Saviour; he was soon in the Sabbath-school as a teacher, and, afterwards, as I told you, he became a most useful minister. Are there not more of you who might try that plan? I know that some of you have done this; then do it over and over again. Deny yourself of a Christian privilege for the sake of bringing others where the Lord will be likely to meet with them, especially if you back up the preacher's word with your continual prayer on behalf of those whom you have brought to listen to his message.

Then, if you really want to bring souls to Christ, remember that there are the young to be taught. Just now, all our schools are languishing for lack of teachers. O you, who would have your crown studded with gems, seek them among the little ones! It is a happy task, however arduous it may be, so give yourselves to it with your whole heart and soul. Others of you, if you do not feel called to take a class of children, might sometimes speak words of warning to the grosser sinners with whom you come into contact, and words of encouragement to those who are seeking the Saviour. There is many and many a poor sinner, floundering in the Slough of Despond, who only wants someone, rightly named Help, to come

and point out to him where the stepping-stones are, or to lend him a hand lest he should altogether sink under his crushing burden of guilt.

This I know, dear Christian friends; if you are not trying to bring sinners to the Saviour, you are missing the chief end of your being, and you are also missing the most joyous work that can ever occupy your attention. Oh, if you bring a soul to Jesus, the joy of it is unspeakable! I have before my mind's eye, at this moment, a little cottage in the country, in which lived the first person of whom I heard that I had been the means of bringing her to Jesus. After preaching for some little time, I wanted some seal to my service; and when the deacon of the little church of which I was the minister said to me, "There was a poor woman cut to the quick, the other Sunday night; and I believe she has found the Saviour," I posted off directly to see her. Those of you who have had a similar experience can imagine the joy I had in hearing her tell the story. She went home years ago,—perhaps the first of those who have gone to heaven, whom God has called by my means; but I was so glad, so happy, so delighted with my first convert that I say to you, "Do seek the same joy, if you yourself know the Lord."

So that is my second point, that all of us, who are believers in Christ, may bring others to him.

III. My third observation is, that THERE ARE SOME OCCASIONS THAT NEED UNITED EXERTIONS.

God, the Holy Spirit, of course does the whole work in the conversion of a soul, but he works by instrumentalities; and there are some desperate cases in which he does not work upon a soul through one instrument alone, but he moves a number of persons to act together to that end. Our text says, "*They* brought him unto him." This poor youth was foaming and gnashing with his teeth, and tearing himself just as you have seen persons do in an epileptic fit, so that it took several persons to hold him; together they grasped him, and, with one desperate, united effort, they brought him to the feet of Jesus, and Jesus cast out the evil spirit, and healed the poor sufferer.

In this way, *people and minister may unite in bringing sinners to the Saviour*. There may be some persons, who come here, who will never be converted until you and I join in seeking their salvation. Somebody must preach, but other bodies must pray; and if a score of you should be praying about any one person in the congregation, I believe that it will not be long before that epileptic is cured. The devil himself shall be defeated by the united prayers of many believers, especially if they are those mighty prayers of which our Saviour spoke when he said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,"—when the praying souls hunger for the salvation of the suffering one, and unitedly cry to God to effect it. We have had much happy union in Christian work, let us have more of it; say to one another, "While the pastor preaches, we will pray; nay, more than that, we will continually remember him in our prayers, for we know that he needs them, and prizes them." That is

quite true, dear friends; for it is no small thing to minister, every Sabbath day, to this great company of people, and then, through the printed page, to address tens of thousands of readers, even to the utmost ends of the earth. Yes, I do indeed need your prayers and your help; give them to me, for then we may be sure that "they"—that is, all of us together,—shall bring many to Jesus.

Another form of co-operation is when there is a soul that has been prayed for, but no answer has come, so you call a few praying people to meet in your house, and you tell them the details of the case, and make a point of praying specially for that person. I have known instances in which brethren have collected a score of Christian friends, who, perhaps, never before met in one place; but they pledged themselves to pray about one particular case; and their united prayers have, with God's blessing, accomplished what previously seemed to be impossible. It has been truly said that, if you have a very hard thing, you can cut it with something harder; and if any heart is especially hard, God can use the hard, strong, persistent vehemence of other mighty, passionate souls to pray the blessing of eternal life into that stubborn, rebellious heart. I would like to hear more frequently of friends banding themselves together, and meeting in their private houses to pray about somebody or other, making the person about whom they are interested the subject of special supplication; that would be the way to bring him to Jesus.

Then, *add to that prayer, distinct united effort.* Perhaps, if one friend should speak to that person, he may resent it. Then, if another should address him, he may receive it coolly. But when another speaks to him, he may begin to listen a little more attentively; and the next one may be able to put the key into the keyhole, and be the means, in the hand of God, of opening the closed door of that man's heart. If God moves us to join in effort for any soul, I do not believe that we shall often find it to be a failure. At any rate, if a man will go down to hell, I should like that we should make it very difficult for him to get there; if he will not turn to Christ, I would that we were resolved that it should not be for want of being prayed for, or for lack of being earnestly pleaded with. We will be clear of his blood; we will shake off the very dust of our feet against such as determine to remain impenitent; and resolve that, to the utmost of our capacity, Christ shall be set forth, so that, if men reject him at all, they shall wilfully reject him.

Oh, that my words might stir up all of you who profess to be Christians! We have over five thousand church-members,—nearly six thousand. Oh, if all were alive unto God, and earnest in his service,—"all at it, and always at it,"—what might not be done, God the Holy Spirit blessing our labours? But, alas! there are many people here, like the camp-followers of an army, who do not fight when the battle comes on. Those who do the fighting are often hampered by these other people; and, sometimes, they almost feel as if they wanted to clear the ground of such loiterers and hinderers; but, instead of doing that, I beg all of you, dear friends,

to wake up, and see what you can do for the Christ who has done so much for you. Let us all ask to be aroused again, and to be thoroughly stirred up in the service of the Saviour. God grant that this South of London—and the North, and West, and East, too,—may be permeated and saturated with your earnest endeavours to bring sinners to the Saviour! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 PETER II. 18—25; AND III. 1—17.

Peter is very practical in his Epistles. In the early days of the faith, Christians occupied a far more difficult and dangerous position than they do to-day. They were few in number, and greatly despised. All manner of crimes were falsely alleged against them; they were accused of things too vile for me to mention. The apostle, in writing to these Christians, begs them so to behave that they should commend the gospel of Christ. Very many of them were servants or slaves; so the apostle says to these lowly followers of Christ, "Here are your duties":—

Chapter ii. Verses 18—20. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

A sense of injustice stings a man; he does not like to lose his rights, or to be buffeted when he has done no ill; but the Spirit of Christ teaches us to "endure grief, suffering wrongfully,"—to bear still, and still to bear. We are to be like the anvil; let others strike us if they will, but we shall wear out the hammers if we only know how to stand still and bear all that is put upon us.

21—23. *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

There was no reason why he should be made to suffer, for he had done no wrong. He was buffeted for no fault of his own, yet how patiently he endured it all! He did not even open his mouth to murmur or complain; but he handed the whole matter over to the Supreme Court of Appeal: "to him that judgeth righteously." It will be wise for us also to feel that we can afford to wait, knowing that our Avenger liveth, and that, in his own good time, he will rectify all wrongs, and justify his people against all their accusers. It is sweet, for the dear love of Jesus, to put up with a thousand things which, otherwise, we should resent. "But," says one, "if you tread on a worm, it will turn." Perhaps it will, but a Christian is not a worm; he is a being of a nobler order than that, and he does not go for his example to reptiles; he looks up to Christ, and follows his steps.

24, 25. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

Wherefore, since you have been brought back by the rich grace of God,

continue to bear and forbear, that you may be the means of bringing others back. That is Peter's counsel to servants, or slaves, as most of them were.

Chapter iii. Verses 1, 2. *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

Could any men be won to Christ without the Word? Yes, it was even so in the apostle's day. When they refused to attend the little Christian meetings that were being held, and so could not hear what was there said, yet, at home, they saw the change that the gospel of Christ had wrought in their wives, and they said, "She is quite different from what she used to be. Certainly, she is a far better wife than any heathen woman is; there must be something in the religion which can make such a change as that." In this way, without the Word, many of them were won to Christ by the godly conversation of their wives.

3, 4. *Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

There is no ornament like that. No taste can ever conceive anything so lovely as a holy character. No expensive materials, and no ingenious fashioning of them, can ever produce such true beauty as "a meek and quiet spirit." You must have known some godly matrons, venerable Christian women, whose gentle piety has blessed the whole household of which they formed a part. They attained supreme authority over all simply by yielding; they gained a queenly position in the house by gentleness and quietness. Nobody dared to offend them;—not because they would have been in a passion, but because they were themselves so inoffensive, so kind, so gentle.

5—7. *For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

It has been one of the most beautiful results of the spread of the Christian religion that it has uplifted womanhood; so that now, instead of women being, as they were, and still are where the gospel is not received, the slaves of their husbands, Christianity has taught that honour should be given to the wife. If there are any husbands who do not so, they err from the gospel way.

8. *Finally, be ye all of one mind,—*

Be unanimous; do not hold church-meetings to talk about nothing, and so quarrel for the want of something to do. Be united with the resolve that you will glorify God, and that there shall be no dissension, no division among you: "Be ye all of one mind,"—

8. *Having compassion one of another,—*

Have true fellow-feeling towards each other.

8. *Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

The Christian should be the highest type of gentleman, in every respect the most gentle man, kind, self-forgetful, seeking the comfort and well-being of others to the utmost of his power.

9. *Not rendering evil for evil,—*

That is beastlike; it is certainly not the rule for a Christian. Good for evil is Godlike; and ye, who are the children of God, should seek to act as he does: "not rendering evil for evil,"—

9. *Or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

Every man should give away according to what he has. He who gives curses probably gives them because he has so much cursing in him. You can always tell what a man is like by noticing what comes from him. If he curses, it is because curses abound in him. But you are to give blessing to others because you have inherited so much blessing from Christ; your whole tone, temper, spirit, language, action should be the means of blessing to others.

10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

Not only no lies, but no guile, no deceit, no shuffling. Say to a man's face all that you say behind his back. You will soon be in trouble if you have two tales to tell, one in his presence, and the other in his absence; but if you are free from "policy"—from "knowing how to play your cards," as the world says, then shall it be seen that you have one of the attributes of a true Christian. If you refrain your lips, that they speak no guile, people will know where to find you, and they will want to find you, for such men are always in demand.

11, 12, *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

He "sets his face against them," as we say that we set our face against certain company which we do not approve. But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,"—that is, those who seek to do good to others, for Christ's sake, are under the special protection of God; and they have the high privilege of being permitted to pray with the certainty that "his ears are open unto their prayers."

13—15. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Have your doctrinal views, and all your knowledge of Christ, packed away in a handy form, so that, when people want to know what you believe, you can tell them. If they wish to know why you believe that you are saved, have your answer all ready in a few plain, simple sentences; and in the gentlest and most modest spirit make your confession of faith to the praise and glory of God. Who knows but what such good seed will bring forth an abundant harvest?

16, 17. *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*

Who can doubt the truth of that clear declaration?

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 992, 552.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BELIEVERS TESTED BY TRIALS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 23RD, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 17th, 1880.

"Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."—Job xxiii. 8—10.

JOB, as we noticed in our reading, was at that time in very deep distress. I commend this fact to the notice of any here who are very sorely tried. You may be the people of God, and yet be in a terrible plight, for Job was a true servant of the Most High, yet he sat down among the ashes, and scraped himself with a potsherd because he was covered with sore boils, and, at the same time, he was reduced to absolute poverty. The path of sorrow has been trodden by thousands of holy feet; you are not the first one who could sit down, and say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction." You were not the first tried one, you are not the only one, and you will not be the last one. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;" so let this be some comfort to you,—that you are one of the Lord's suffering children, one of those who have to pass through rough roads and fiery places in the course of their pilgrimage to heaven.

Job had to experience one trial which must have been very keen indeed, for it was brought about by his three choice friends, who were evidently men of mind and mark, for their speeches prove that they were by no means second-class men. Job would not have selected for his bosom friends any but those who were of high character, estimable in disposition, and able to converse with him upon high and lofty themes. Such, no doubt, those three men were; and I expect that, when Job saw them coming towards him, he looked for a store of comfort from them, imagining that they would at least sympathize with him, and pour out such consolations as their own experience could suggest, in order that he might be somewhat relieved. But he was utterly disappointed; these friends of his reasoned that there must be some extraordinary cause for such unusual distress as that into which Job had fallen. They had never

seen wrong in him; but, then, he might be a very cunning man, and so have concealed it from them. As far as they had known him, he seemed to be a generous, liberal soul; but, perhaps, after all, he was one of those who squeeze the uttermost farthing out of the poor. They could not read his heart, so they put the worst construction upon his sorrows, and said, "Depend upon it, he is a hypocrite; we will apply caustic to him, and so we will test him, and see whether he really is what he professes to be. We will rub salt into his wounds by bringing various charges against him;" and they did so in a most horrible fashion. That is a cruel thing for anybody to do, and one that cuts to the quick. Possibly, some people, who used to court your company, and would not let you go down the street without bowing to you, now that your circumstances are changed, do not recognize you; or if they cannot help seeing you, they appear to have some distant recollection that, years ago, you were a casual acquaintance; or, peradventure, if they do speak in a kind, friendly way, though their words are smoother than butter, war is in their heart; though their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords. You must be a bad man because you have come down in the world; it cannot be that you are the respectable person they thought you were, or you would not have lost your estate; for, in the estimation of some folk, to be respectable means to have a certain amount of cash. The definition was once given, in a court of law, that if a man kept a gig, it was proved by that fact that he was respectable. That is the way of the world; respect and respectability depend upon so much money; but the moment that is gone, the scene changes. The man is the same; ay, he may be a better and a nobler man without the money than with it; but it is only noble men who think so. It is only rightminded persons who judge not by the coat or the purse, but who say, with Burns,—

"A man's a man for a' that,—"

whatever may be his condition. Character is the thing to which we ought to look;—the man himself, and not merely his surroundings. But Job had to bear just that ignoble sort of scorn that some men seem to delight to pour upon the sorrows of others.

I want, first, to call your attention to *Job's desire in the time of his trouble.* It was his earnest desire to get to his God. Secondly, we will notice *Job's distress because he could not find him:* "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him." And, thirdly, we will consider *Job's consolation:* "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

I. First, then, notice JOB'S DESIRE IN THE TIME OF HIS TROUBLE.

He wanted his God; he did not long to see Bildad, or Eliphaz, or Zophar, or any earthly friend; but his cry was "Oh, that I knew where I might find HIM! that I might come even to his seat!" This is one of the marks of a true child of God,—that, even when God smites him, he still longs for his presence. If you get to the very back of all Job's calamities, you will see that God sent them; or, at least, permitted Satan to afflict him. "Yet," says Job, "I will

not turn in anger against God because of this. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Let him do what he will with me, I will still seek to get near to him, and this shall be my heart's desire, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!'" An ungodly man, if he has made any pretence of fellowship with God in his days of prosperity, forsakes him as soon as adversity comes; but the true child of God clings to his Father however roughly he may deal with him. We are not held captive to God by a chain of sweets, nor are we bought with cupboard love, nor bribed in any other way to love him; but now, because he first loved us, our heart hath loved him, and rested in him; and if cross providences and strange dealings come from the hand of the Most High, our cry shall not be, "Oh that we could get away from him!" but, "Oh that we knew where we might find him, that we might come even to his seat!" This is the mark of our regeneration and adoption,—that, whatever happens, we still cling to our God.

For, beloved friends, when a man is in trouble, if he can but get to God, in the first place, *he is quite sure of justice.* Men may condemn us falsely, but God never will. Our character may be cruelly slandered; and, doubtless, there have been good men who have lived for years under false accusations;—but God knoweth the way that we take. He will be the Advocate of his servants when their case is laid before the heavenly Court of King's Bench. We need not be afraid that the verdict will not be just: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

We know also that, if we can get to God, *we shall have audience.* Sometimes, men will not hear us when we are pleading for justice. "I do not want to hear a word you have to say," says the man who is so prejudiced that he will not listen to our plea. But there is an ear that no prejudice ever sealed; there is a heart that is ever sympathetic towards the griefs of a believer. You are sure to be heard, beloved, if you pour out your heart before the God that heareth prayer. He will never be weary of your cries; they may be poor, broken utterances, but he takes the meaning of the sighs of his saints, he understands the language of their groans. Go, then, to God because you are sure of audience.

What is more, in getting near to God, a man is *sure to have strength.* You notice how Job puts it: "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me." When once we get to realize that God is with us, how strong we are! Then we can bear the burden of want or of pain, or even the sharp adder's tongue of slander. The man who has God with him is a very Samson; he may fling himself upon a troop of Philistines, and smite them hip and thigh; he may lay hold of the pillars of their temple, rock them to and fro, and bring down the whole building upon them. I say not that we shall work miracles, but I do say that, as our days, so shall our strength be.

> "I can do all things, or can bear
> All sufferings, if my Lord be there."

And, once more, he who gets to his God is *sure of joy.* There

was never a soul, that was right with God, and that was unhappy in the presence of God. Up yonder in glory, how gladly they smile! How I would like to photograph their beaming faces! What a group that would be,—of angel faces bathed in everlasting light, and the faces of those redeemed from among men, all radiant with celestial joy. What gives them that gladness? It is because God is there that they are so happy.

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
If God his residence remove,
Or but conceal his face."

Just as the sun makes the landscape bright and fair, so does the light of God's countenance make all his people glad. It would not matter to a man whether he were in a dungeon or a palace if he had the constant presence of God; I am not speaking at random when I make that assertion. Read the record of the martyr days of the Church, and you will understand that the presence of God caused his persecuted people to be the happiest in the whole world. No minstrels in royal halls ever sang so sweetly as did the prisoners of the Lord who were confined in deep, dark, underground dungeons, where they could scarcely breathe. Nay, that is not all; for some have been happy even on the rack. Think of brave Lady Anne Askew sitting on the cold stones after the cursed inquisitors had torn her poor feeble frame almost limb from limb; and when they tempted her to turn from the faith, she answered,—

"I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall
For every dryslynge mist;
My shippe's substancyal."

Some who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, declared, as in the case of Lawrence, that the gridiron was a bed of roses, and that they never were so joyous as when their body was being consumed in the fire,—every finger being like a lighted candle,—for they were able even then to cry, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" It is amazing how the presence of God seems to be an anodyne that kills all pain;—an uplifting, like an angel's wing, that bears upward one who, without it, would be utterly crushed. The martyr is torn in pieces, and full of agonies, and yet all his sufferings are transformed, till they become sweet harmonies of intense delight because God is with him. Oh! give me God, give me God, and I care not what you withhold from me. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

II. The brightness of the first part of my subject will help to make the second portion all the darker. We are now to consider JOB'S DISTRESS,—the agony of a true child of God who cannot find his Father.

Your experiences are not all alike, brethren, and I do not want you to try to make them all alike. Some of you have very happy experiences, and very little spiritual trial. I am glad it is so; I

only hope you will not be superficial, or conceited, or censorious of others. But there are some who know the darker paths in the heavenly pilgrimage, and it is to those that I specially speak just now. Dear friends, I pray you to remember that a man may be a true servant of God, and even an eminent and distinguished servant of God like Job, and yet he may sometimes lose the light of God's countenance, and have to cry out, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" There are some special, superfine, hot-pressed Christians about, nowadays, who do not believe this. They say, "You ought to be joyous; you ought never to be depressed; you ought to be perfect;" all which is quite true, but it is a great deal easier to say so than to show how it is to be realized; and these brethren, who talk as if it were a very simple matter, like counting your fingers, may some day find that it is more difficult than they think, as some of us have sometimes done.

Job could not find his God; this is *apparently strange*. He was a specially good man, one who did what he could for all around him,—a very light in the city where he dwelt,—a man famous in all the country, yet in great trouble;—one might have thought that God would certainly comfort him. He has lost everything; surely, now the Lord will return to him, and be gracious unto him, and above all other times he will be cheered now with the presence of God. Yet it was not so. He was a man who valued the company of God, and who cried, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Yet he could not find him. It is passing strange; or, at least, it appears to be so.

Yet notice, next, that *it is essentially needful to some trials that God should withdraw the light of his countenance*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the woes that he endured, could not have been made perfect through sufferings unless he had learnt to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When God means to smite any child of his with the rod, he cannot do it with a smile. Suppose a father is chastening his son, and all the while is comforting him, where is the chastening? No; the very essence of the medicinal sorrow that is to do good to our souls will lie in our having to bewail the absence of the smile of God.

This is essential to our trial, but *it is greatly perplexing*. I do not know of anything that so troubles a Christian man as when he does not know where his God is. "God is everywhere," says one. I know he is, but yet there is a special presence which he manifests to his people, and sometimes it seems to them as if he were nowhere at all. So Job exclaimed, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him." Tried children of God, you have had this experience; and it is very perplexing because, when you cannot find your God, you cannot make out why you are being troubled. An affliction that will talk is always a light one; but I dread most of all a dumb affliction, that cannot tell me why it has come. When I look around it, and ask, "Why is this?" and I cannot get an answer, that is what plagues me much. And when you cannot find God, you do not yourself know what to do; for, in losing him, you have lost your Guide. You are in a

maze, and know not how to get out of it. You are like a man in a net; the more you pull, this way or that, the more you tighten the bonds that hold you prisoner. Where you hoped to have relieved yourself, you only brought yourself into further difficulties in another direction; and this bewilderment is one of the worst of sorrows.

The loss of God's presence is also *inexpressibly painful to a believer*. If you can live without God, I am afraid you will die without God; but if you cannot live without God, that proves that you are his, and you will bear me out in the assertion that this is the heaviest of mortal griefs,—to feel that God has forsaken you, and does not hear your prayer;—nay, does not seem even to help you to pray, so that you can only groan, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him."

Then, dear friends, in closing what I have to say about this dark side of the subject, let me remind you that *it is marvellously arousing*, because the true child of God, when he finds that his Father has forsaken him for a while, gets to be terribly unhappy. Then he begins to cry and to seek after God. Look at Job; he hunts for God everywhere,—forward, backward, on the left hand, on the right hand. He leaves no quarter unvisited; no part of the earth is left without being searched over that he might find his God. Nothing brings a real Christian to his bearings, and awakes all his faculties, like the consciousness of his Lord's absence. Then he cries, "My God, where art thou? I have lost the sense of thy presence; I have missed the light of thy countenance." A man, in such a case as this, goes to the prayer-meeting, in the hope that other people's prayers may help to make his sad heart happy again. He reads his Bible, too, as he has not read it for months. You will also find him listening to the gospel with the utmost eagerness, and nothing but the gospel will satisfy him now. At one time, he could listen to that pleasant kind of talk that lulls the hearers to slumber, but now he wants a heart-searching ministry, and a message that will go right into him, and deal faithfully with him; and he is not content unless he gets it. Besides this, he is anxious to talk with Christian friends of riper experience than his own; and he deals seriously and earnestly with these eternal matters which, before, he perhaps trifled with as mere technicalities. You see a man, who once lived in the light of God's countenance, and you will find him wretched indeed when the light is gone. He must have his God.

III. Now, lastly, I want to speak, for a little while, concerning THE TRIED BELIEVER'S CONSOLATION. It is a very sweet consolation: "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

God knows and understands all about his child. I do not know his way, but he knows mine. I am his child, and my Father is leading me, though I cannot see him, for all around me it is so misty and dark. I can scarcely feel his hand that grasps my little palm, so I cry to him, "Where art thou, my Father? I cannot see my way;

the next step before me threatens to plunge me into imminent peril. I know nothing, my Father, but thou knowest." That is just where knowledge is of most use; it does not so much matter what you do not know so long as God knows it, for he is your Guide. If the guide knows the way, the traveller under his care may be content to know but little. "He knoweth the way that I take." There is nothing about you, my brother, which God does not perfectly understand. You are a riddle to yourself, but you are no riddle to him. There are mysteries in your heart that you cannot explain, but he has the clue of every maze, the key of every secret drawer, and he knows how to get at the hidden springs of your spirit. He knows the trouble that you could not tell to your dearest friend, the grief you dare not whisper in any human ear.

I find that the Hebrew has this meaning, "He knoweth the way that is in me." God knows whether I am his child or not; whether I am sincere or not. While others are judging me harshly, he judges me truly; he knows what I really am. This is a sweet consolation; take it to yourself, tried believer.

Next, *God approves of his child.* The word "know" often has the meaning of approval, and it has that sense here. Job says "God approves of the way that I take." When you are in trouble, it is a grand thing to be able to say, "I know that I have done that which is right in the sight of God, although it has brought me into great trial. 'My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.'" If you have a secret and sure sense of God's approval in the time of your sorrow, it will be a source of very great strengthening to your spirit.

But Job meant more than this. He meant that *God was considering him,—and helping him even then.* The fact that he knows of our needs guarantees that he will supply them. You remember how our Lord Jesus Christ puts this truth: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Does he know all about our need? It is all right then; the Head of the house knows the need of all the members of his family, and that is enough, for he never yet failed to supply all the wants of those who depend upon him. When I need guidance, he will himself be my Guide. He will supply me when I lack supplies, he will defend me when I need defence, he will give me all things that I really require. There is an old proverb that says, "Where God is, nothing is lacking;" and it is blessedly true. Only remember that there is an ancient precept with a gracious promise attached to it, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Believe it, and obey it, and you shall find it true in your case.

Furthermore, when Job says, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," he comforts himself with the belief that *God times and manages all things,*—that his present distresses are a trial, by which God is testing him. A man who is like solid gold is not afraid to be tested. No tradesman is afraid to put into the scales that which is full weight; for, if it is weighed, it will be proved to

be what he says it is. When the inspector of weights and measures comes round, the gentleman who does not like to see him is the man of short weights and incorrect scales. He who knows he is upright and sincere dares say even to the Lord, himself, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my ways: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We do not profess to be perfect, but we dare claim to be sincere, and he who is sincere is not afraid of being tested and tried. Real gold is not afraid of the fire; why should it be? What has it to lose? So Job seems to say, "I know that God hath put integrity within my spirit, and now that he is testing me, he will not carry the test further than, by his grace, I shall be able to bear."

Lastly, Job's comfort was that *God secures the happy result of trial.* He believed that, when God had tried him, he would bring him forth as gold. Now, how does gold come out of the crucible? How does a true Christian man come out of the darkness and obscurity of missing his God for a while? How does he come out like gold? In the Hebrew, the word has an allusion to the bright colour of the gold; so, when a Christian is tried, is there not a bright colour upon him? Even though he may have lost, for a while, the bright shining of God's countenance, when that brightness returns, there is a lustre about him which you cannot help seeing. He will speak of his God in a more impressive way than he ever spoke before. Examine the books that are most comforting to believers, and that satisfy their souls, and you will find that the men who wrote them were those who had been severely tried; and when they came out of the fire, there was a brilliance upon them which would not otherwise have been there. If you walk in darkness, and see no light, believe that, when God hath tried you, you shall come forth with the brightness of newly-minted gold.

But brightness is of little value without preciousness, and the children of God grow more precious through their trials; and, being precious, they become objects of desire. Men desire gold above almost everything else, yet the Lord has said, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." There are some godly men whose company we court, and some Christian women whose society, when they talk of spiritual things, is worth a Jew's eye to one that is in distress. Happy are they whom God has passed through the fire, who become precious and desirable when they come out of it.

And they become honourable, too. "When he hath tried me," said Job, "even though my friends despise me now, when I come forth, they shall have different thoughts concerning me." They thought a great deal more of Job when God was angry with them, and would not restore them to his favour until the patriarch had prayed for them, than they thought of him when they went to find fault with him; and the day shall come to thee, true child of God, when those who now persecute thee, and look down upon thee, shall look up to thee. Joseph may be cast into the pit by his brethren, and sold into Egypt, but he shall yet sit on the throne, and all his father's sons shall bow before him.

Once more, you shall come out of the fire uninjured. It looks very hard to believe that a child of God should be tried by the loss of his Father's presence, and yet should come forth uninjured by the trial. Yet no gold is ever injured in the fire. Stoke the furnace as much as you may, let the blast be as strong as you will, thrust the ingot into the very centre of the white heat, let it lie in the very heart of the flame; pile on more fuel, let another blast torment the coals till they become most vehement with heat, yet the gold is losing nothing, it may even be gaining. If it had any alloy mingled with it, the alloy is separated from it by the fire, and to gain in purity is the greatest of gains. But the pure gold is not one drachm less; there is not a single particle of it that can be burnt. It is there still, all the better for the fiery trial to which it has been subjected; and thou, dear child of God, whatever may befall thee, shalt come out of the fire quite uninjured. Thou art under a dark cloud just now; but thou shalt come out into brightness, and thou shalt have lost nothing that was worth keeping. What is there that thou canst lose? When death comes, what wilt thou lose?

> "Corruption, earth, and worms
> Shall but refine this flesh,
> Till my triumphant spirit comes
> To put it on afresh."

When we put on our new clothes, this body that shall have passed through God's transforming hand,—shall we be losers? No; we shall say, "What a difference! Is this my Sabbath garment? The old one was dark and dingy, dusty and defiled; this is whiter than any fuller could make it, and brighter than the light." You will scarcely know yourselves, my brothers and sisters; you will know other people, I daresay; but I think you will hardly recognize yourselves when once you have put on your new array. You cannot really lose anything by death. You will not lose the eyes you part with for a while; for, when Christ shall stand, at the latter day, upon the earth, your eyes shall behold him. You shall lose no faculty, no power, but you shall infinitely gain even by death itself; and that is the very worst of your enemies, so that you shall certainly gain by all the rest. Come then, pluck up courage, and march boldly on. Fear no ghosts, for they are but spectres, there is no reality about them.

Beloved, note well this closing word. *God is here.* You need not go forward to find him, or backward to hunt after him, or on the left to search for him, or on the right to see him. He is with his people still, as he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Oh, seek him, then, every one of you, and God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOB XXIII., AND XXIV.

Always remember, dear friends, that one of the great lessons of the Book of Job is this,—that we may never judge a man's character by his condition. The best of men may have the most of suffering and of poverty, while the worst of men may prosper in everything. Do not imagine, because a man suddenly becomes very poor or a great sufferer, that therefore he must be a great sinner; otherwise, you will often condemn the innocent, and you will, at the same time, be guilty of flattering the wicked. Job's friends had cruelly told him that he must be a hypocrite, or else he would not have lost his property, and have been smitten with such a remarkable sickness; so he appeals to God against their unrighteous judgment.

Chapter xxiii. Verses 1, 2. *Then Job answered and said, Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.*

"Although my groaning is heavy, yet it is not so burdensome as my griefs might warrant."

3. *Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!*

"To his judgment-seat, that I might plead my cause, and vindicate my character even there."

4—6. *I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power?*

"Being the great God, will he silence me by a display of his omnipotence? Oh, no! he is too just to do that."

6. *No; but he would put strength in me.*

"He would help me to argue my case; he would deal fairly with me; he would not be like you so-called friends of mine, who sit there, and exult over my weakness and my griefs, and torture me with your cruel words."

7—10. *There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take:*

"If I cannot find him, or see him, he can see me, and he knows all about me."

10. *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

This is beautiful faith on the part of Job. It is very easy for us to read these lines, and to say, "No doubt, tried men do come out of the furnace purified like gold;" but it is quite another thing to be ourselves in the crucible, and to read such a passage as this by the light of the fire, and then to be able to say, "We know it is true, for we are proving its truth even now."

This is the kind of chapter that many a broken heart has to read by itself alone. Many a weeping eye has scanned these words of Job, and truly blessed has that troubled one been who has been able to chime in with the sweet music of this verse: "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

11. *My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.*

It is a great thing to be able to say that, as Job truly could, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God that Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." It was not self-righteousness that made him speak as he did; he had the right to say it, and he did say it.

12, 13. *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?*

"His mind is made up to chasten me; he means to afflict me again and again; so what can I do but yield to his will?"

13. *And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.*

There is, on Job's part, a reverential bowing before the supreme power an acknowledgment of God's right to do with him as he wills.

14. *For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.*

"More arrows to pierce me, more sorrows to grieve me."

15—17. *Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.*

He wished that he had died before those evil days had come upon him; and that is the way that a good man, an undoubted saint of God, is sometimes driven to speak. There are, perhaps, some who will say, "Then we don't want to be children of God if that is how they are tried." Ah! but that was only the sorrow of an hour. See where Job is now; think of what he was even a few days after he made this mournful complaint, when God had turned his sighing into singing, and his mourning into morning light.

In the next chapter, Job speaks of those who were the reverse of himself,—wicked and ungodly men, who nevertheless prospered in this life.

Chapter xxiv. Verse 1. *Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?*

"Why do they live so long? Why do they appear to have such prosperity?"

2—4. *Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.*

"They are hard-hearted enough to rob even poor widows and orphan children."

5. *Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work;—*

Like wild asses, their work consists in going forth to do mischief.

5. *Rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.*

For there are some so hard that they would skin a flint, and out of the wilderness would manage to get food. Yet such hard oppressors of others sometimes seem to prosper for a while.

6—12. *They reap every one his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. They pluck the fatherless*

from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.

He lets them alone, leaves them to do as they please. So it seems; but this is not the day of judgment, and this is not the place of final retribution. Now and then, God flashes forth his anger against some gross sinner or some national crime; but as for the most of men's sins, he beareth with them till that tremendous day shall come, which draweth on apace, when he shall hang the heavens in sackcloth, and hold the last assize, and every man shall receive according to his works.

13—17. *They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.*

These are the men who plunder secretly, who rob, yet cannot bear to be known as thieves.

18. *He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth:*

There was no curse upon Job, and no curse can come near the true child of God; his scanty portion is still blest. But the large portion of the ungodly is cursed even while he is in the earth.

18—20. *He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him;*

What a sarcastic utterance! This man, who lorded it over others,—how glad the worm shall be to get at him! This fat worldling shall be a rich feast for the worms.

20. *He shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.*

It shall snap off, and be brought to an ignominious end.

21—24. *He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.*

In the East, they generally reap their harvest by just taking off the tops of the ears of corn, and leaving the straw. Thus will the wicked be cut off.

25. *And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?*

Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms,—that the righteous may be greater sufferers, and the wicked may for a while prosper, but that God will, in the end, overthrow the ungodly, and establish the righteous.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION TO MARY MAGDALENE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 30TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Lord's-day Evening, in the summer of 1859.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."—John xx. 17.

THIS was the first appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection. In sundry places and at divers times, during the ensuing forty days, he appeared to different disciples, showing himself openly to them when they were assembled for worship, and at other seasons; but this was the first occasion of his being seen by any of his followers after he had risen from the dead. The whole incident is full of consolation; and we, who are poor weary pilgrims through this earthly wilderness, need some words of comfort every now and then to cheer us on the road. May the Holy Spirit sweetly assist us in meditating now upon the things of Christ, and may our hearts burn within us as he speaks to us by the way!

I. First, IT IS PECULIARLY ENCOURAGING TO REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST PERSON TO WHOM OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST APPEARED AFTER HIS RESURRECTION WAS MARY MAGDALENE.

Mark expressly says, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." Romanists will have it that Jesus Christ first of all appeared to the Virgin Mary, his mother, and they have invented some curious stories in order to give her this peculiar honour. This shows that, in their opinion, there was a special favour conferred upon the person who first beheld the risen Saviour; and I need not say that their assertion that it was the Virgin Mary is only just another instance of their common practice of perverting the truth. Undoubtedly, Mary Magdalene was the first person who saw the Saviour after his resurrection; at least, if the Roman guards saw him when they shook, and became as dead men through fear of the angel who rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, they were not Christ's disciples; so I mean that Mary Magdalene

was the first of his faithful followers who had the honour of seeing him after he rose from the dead.

It was a woman, then, who first beheld the risen Saviour. It was a woman who was first in the transgression; it had, therefore, to be a woman who should first behold Jesus Christ when he rose from the grave. If there be—and there certainly is—some degree of opprobrium connected with womanhood, because Eve first of all touched the forbidden fruit, there is a far greater degree of glory now connected with it, because Mary Magdalene first of all beheld the Saviour after his rising from the tomb.

Not only was it a woman to whom Christ first manifested himself after his resurrection, but it was a woman out of whom he had cast seven devils. I am inclined to think that there were other devils in Mary Magdalene beside those that made her a demoniac. Luther used to say of her, "So many devils, so many sins." She had been first a sinner, then she became a demoniac, and afterwards Christ changed her into a saint. How strange it was that Jesus should appear first to her! What, give the highest honour to her who had the most of sin! Sweet thought! Then, if—

"I the chief of sinners am,"—

if I have an interest in the blood of Christ, there is no reason why I should not climb to the greatest heights of fellowship, and enjoy the best of the good things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. When Jesus takes a sinner to himself, his pardon is so complete,—so totally does God, for Christ's sake, overlook all previous sin,—that, although he may not be as great a saint as the very chief of the apostles, who did most grievously rebel, so that he only obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief, he may be the most highly-favoured of the servants of the Lord, and may have very special revelations made to him. The experience of Mary Magdalene should be a great source of comfort to you who, after years of sin, have lately found the Saviour. Think not that those years that you spent in folly, though they must ever make you weep, will be the means of robbing you of fellowship with him. Oh, no! he will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten, and he will not take away from you the pleasure of enjoying the bliss of God on earth, and certainly he will not diminish your glorious happiness when you shall stand before his throne above.

In thinking over this subject, I have come to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene was selected to see Christ first because she loved him most. John loved Jesus much, but Mary loved him more. John looked into the empty sepulchre, and then went away home; but Mary stood there, and wept, until her risen Lord appeared to her. Love, you know, is a keen-eyed grace. People usually say that love is blind. In one sense, the saying is true; but, in another sense, there never were such good eyes anywhere else as those which love carries in her head. Love will look for Jesus, and discover him where none else can. If I set the unloving to read a chapter in the Bible, they will find no Saviour there; but if I ask the gracious

Robert Hawker to read that same portion of Scripture, he finds in it the name of Jesus from beginning to end. If I beg one, who is simply a critical scholar, to study a Psalm, he sees no Messiah there; but if I set an enthusiastic lover of the Saviour to read it, he sees him, if not in every verse, still here and there he has glimpses of his glory.

If you want to see Jesus, and to have sweet revelations of his glory, you must love him. I must add to that remark, that you must weep for him much, you must seek him diligently, seek him in the darkness and the twilight, seek him when the sun has risen, seek him at the sepulchre before the stone is rolled away; you must seek him when you behold that the stone is gone; you must seek him in the hollow tomb; you must seek him in the garden; you must seek him in life; you must seek him in death; and then, the more diligent you are in seeking, the greater is the probability that Christ will manifest himself to you, and that you shall rejoice in finding him. Mary Magdalene was one of those who went forth bearing precious seed; she went forth weeping, but she returned to the disciples rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her, for she had a joyous message for them. She had sown in tears when she went to seek her Lord, but she wept with joy when she found him in the garden. Happy was that woman who found Jesus, and who believed; truly she might rejoice in him, for she was highly favoured among women.

You see, then, that there is much sweetness, far more than I can tell you, in the thought that Mary Magdalene was the first person who was chosen to see the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection.

II. Secondly, we will notice SOME REASONS FOR THE PROHIBITION GIVEN IN THE TEXT. Why was it that Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not"? And why was it that he gave this very strange reason for the prohibition, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father"?

There seems to me to be great comfort in this message; I know it has comforted me, so I think I understand it aright. When Mary Magdalene had recognized her risen Redeemer, and had called him "Rabboni, that is to say, Master," her next impulse was to cast herself upon him, and embrace him. But Jesus said to her, "No; embrace me not;"—for that is the real meaning of the word,—"I have something for you to do for me, so I cannot allow you to stop to manifest your affection; there will be plenty of time to do that another day. I want to send you to my disciples at once with a message; therefore, cling not to me. The strengthening of my disciples is preferable even to the embracing of your Lord. Cling not to me, for I am not yet ascended." It strikes me that Mary was half afraid that her Master would go away directly; and she thought, "That is my Master, for I know his voice; but I fear that he will vanish; the Spirit of God will take him away." She thought concerning Christ just as Obadiah did concerning Elijah. When Obadiah found the prophet, Elijah said to him, "Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here." "And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee:

and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me." Obadiah expected that Elijah would be spirited away, and Mary thought the same concerning Christ; so she said to herself, "I will hold him fast. This may be my only opportunity; so I will not let him go." But Jesus said, "I am not going away; I shall be here a little while longer; there will be time enough for embraces yet. The first thing I want you to do is to go to my disciples, and tell them that I have risen from the grave, and that I am about to ascend to heaven."

If you ask, "Why did Jesus speak thus to Mary Magdalene?", I think it is not difficult to explain the reason. Let me suppose that one of you has said, "I will have an hour for quiet meditation; I will cast myself upon my knees; I will open the Word of God; I will seek the Spirit to rest upon me; and I will hope that I shall be able to see Jesus, and to clasp him in my arms." Just as you have formed this resolve, a friend calls, and says that he has an important engagement for you to fulfil. Perhaps he wants you to attend a prayer-meeting, or to visit the sick, or to see some enquirer, or to do something for the Lord's cause; and you say, "There now; I expected to have had this evening for contemplation. Oh, I wish I had not so much to do with the church, for it robs me of my quiet hours! I love those sweet seasons of retirement when I can embrace the Saviour, and clasp him to my heart. Why is it that I am to go out and feed the flock, and not find time for fellowship and communion so long and frequent as I desire?" Whenever you feel inclined to talk like that, think that you hear your Master saying to you, "Embrace me not; there will be time in heaven for that. Go thou to my brethren, and carry to them some words of consolation; for while it is sweet for thee to embrace me, it is sweeter to me for thee to go and embrace my poor brother, and show him the way into my kingdom."

God forbid that we should say one word against the high joys of contemplation! It is a blessed employment; but, sometimes, work is better than worship; or rather, work is worship in its best form. Sometimes, it is a higher service to go to see the sick than to be at home on your knees. Sometimes, it is a more devout way of serving God to be busy for the church, even in what seem to be temporal matters, than to be seated at home, like Mary of old, at the feet of the Saviour, listening to his words, but doing nothing for his cause. I believe Martha is at times a great deal more useful than Mary. If Mary had always sat at the Saviour's feet, she would have deserved no commendation. It was well that she sat there then, for it was a proper occasion; but if she had sat there always, and left Martha to attend to the serving alone, then it would have been an abuse of her privileges. There are times when the Master must say, "Embrace me not; but go to my brethren,

and tell them that I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

III. Now, having noticed these two portions of our text, which I think are full of comfort,—if not to you, they certainly have been to me,—I will now endeavour to dilate upon THE MESSAGE OF OUR LORD TO MARY MAGDALENE.

Jesus said to her, "Go to my brethren." It is a remarkable fact that, *the higher Jesus Christ gets in glory, the more sweet are his expressions of love.* You know that, before his death, he said to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Yet now that he had risen from the dead, he called them by a still higher name. Possibly, some of them thought, "If he should rise from the dead, he will be ashamed of us poor fishermen. He called us 'friends' when he was in his poverty; will he not return to that word 'servants' when he rises in majesty from the tomb?" No; when he had risen in dignity, it was just the reverse. The higher his dignity, the lower his condescension. "Go to my *brethren.*"

There is another thing to be noted about that sweet word "brethren" as Christ then used it, for his disciples were never in a more sinful condition than they were at that time; or, rather, they had never so grossly sinned as they had done a little before the Saviour's resurrection. They were with him every day; they were, all of them, in a measure faithful, and never forsook their Master, and never denied him, till he came to die. Yet, all the time they were true and faithful, he called them friends. You would have thought that, when three of them slept in the garden during his awful agony, when all forsook him and fled, and when Peter especially denied him, the Saviour would have said, "I called you friends when you were faithful, I will now see whether I can stretch a point, even to call you servants." But we see that, the blacker was their sin, the stronger was his love; the more defiled they were, the more sweetly did he talk to them. He said to them, in deeds though not in words, "Henceforth, I call you not friends, for a mere friend is no relation; but I call you brethren, for my Father is your Father, and my God is your God."

Carry those two sweet thoughts away with you, for sweet indeed they will be to you if the Holy Spirit shall teach you the full meaning of them,—that the higher the Saviour gets, the more free is he in the expression of his love; and that other thought, that the farther the disciples ran away from their Master, the more lovingly did he call them back again. This is marvellous and strange, but it is nevertheless true; who cannot derive comfort from such thoughts as these? I know, ye feeble followers of Jesus, ye have sometimes thought that he loved his people when he was on earth, but that now he reigns exalted on high, he has forgotten such of them as you are; but, be ye assured that, inasmuch as he has reached the summit of his glory, he doth now manifest the summit of his love. The more he is exalted, the more doth he manifest himself.

Possibly, some of you are thinking that you have so greatly sinned that you cannot expect him to love you. If so, you can appropriate this thought that *the sweetest promises in the Bible are for the very people who deserve them the least.* There are promises for those who follow close to their Saviour, and very sweet ones, too; but some of the tenderest promises in the Word of God are for those who have wandered furthest away from him. Take, for instance, this gracious message, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Blessed Jesus, when we should have thought that our sins would cause thee to speak most harshly against us, we find that thou hast the softest words for those who have most erred; and that our sins, which must make thee angry, seem also to make thee invite us back again with sweeter words than thou dost use to those who have not grieved thee as much as we have done.

Note again, *every time our Lord Jesus Christ says anything to his brethren, it is something that requires faith on their part.* Why did he not say, "Go and tell my brethren that I have risen from the grave"? Because they did not need any faith for that. He had risen; that was a fact that they could discover by their eyesight, and some of them by their touch. "No," says he, "I will make large drafts upon my people's faith. Go and tell them that I am about to ascend to my Father; that is something great for them to believe." Do you know, Christian friends, that the more you have of the manifest presence of Christ, the more faith you require? Have you not often asked to have a promise brought home to your heart by the special influences of the Spirit? Now, recollect, the more promises you have, the more faith you will require. The words of Christ demand faith on our part. A manifestation from Christ is as truly a demand upon our faith as when he hides his face from us. When he hides his face, he requires us still to believe in him even when he says nothing; but when he speaks, he requires us to believe something that he says. The more manifestations Christ grants to you, the more is your need of faith.

"I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Luther was right when he said that all the pith of divinity lay in the pronouns. "*My* Father and *your* Father." "He is 'my Father' by eternal generation. I was begotten of my Father before any of the worlds were made. He is 'your Father' by regeneration. He hath begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is 'my Father,' as I am the Head of the Church,—I call him Father in my Christhood, as God and man; and as I am your Representative, and you are all gathered up in me, he is your Father, too: my Father, and your Father." How sweet is the word Father in such a connec-

tion! He is our Father because he has the deepest love to protect us; and if we doubt whether his power is equal to his love, let us notice what Jesus next says, "I ascend to my God, and your God." And inasmuch as God is omnipotent, and the Father is love, you have all the love you need, and all the power equal to that love. It seems sweet to hear Christ calling his Father his God. As he was a man, the Father was his God; as he was Christ, the God-man, the Father was God over him; and speaking as a man, he could say, "My Father is greater than I," God the Father being greater than the Mediator, who said, in effect, "As man, I worship him even as you worship him; as man, I look up to him as my Father the same as you do. He is my Father as he is your Father."

I have only to make one other remark, *how beautifully the Saviour refers to the believer's union with himself!* The whole Bible, when it is rightly understood, points to the believer's union with Christ, and this sweet verse is full of that blessed truth. Christ and his people have united interests. When Christ calls God his Father, we may call God "our Father," too. In his inheritance we have a joint interest; he is Heir of all things, and we are joint-heirs with him. In relationship, Christ and his people are closely united. His brethren are our brethren; his Father is our Father. Even in service, as Christ was man, as he was the Servant of God for our sakes, so the Master whom he served is the Master whom we serve, and we together take the same service upon ourselves, believing that we together shall have the same kingdom conferred upon us, and shall reign with Christ for ever and ever.

An old divine calls Mary Magdalene *apostola apostolorum*, that is, the apostle to the apostles. An apostle is one who is sent, and Mary Magdalene was sent to those whom Christ afterwards sent to the ends of the earth. In like manner, a poor humble woman may be an apostle to one who shall afterwards be a great divine. Let us hear, then, what this great apostle to the apostles has to say to us. She does not now tell us that Jesus Christ is about to ascend, she tells us that he has ascended; and whenever we draw around the table of our Lord, let us derive sweet influence from the fact that Jesus Christ has ascended. He ascended as a Conqueror, leading captivity captive. He ascended as a Forerunner for us, entering within the veil. He has ascended to make preparation for his people, according to his promise, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He has ascended as our Intercessor; there he stands for ever interceding before the throne of God for us, his children, his friends, his brethren. Oh, that we may now put our unfeigned and constant trust in him who died, putting equal trust in him who rose again, making this our glory, both in his dying and in his rising, that he hath ascended up on high, and taken his lawful place at the right hand of God, where he also maketh intercession for us!

Oh, that those who are dead in sin were quickened by God's Spirit that they might know something of the preciousness of having a Father in heaven, the same Father that Jesus Christ had!

Sinner, I pray the Lord to teach thee to believe in Jesus Christ; and if thou hast sinned with Mary Magdalene, may he help thee to believe with her, that thou mayest share in her sweet manifestations, and have a gracious message like hers to tell some day to the rest of thy brethren!

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH XL.; AND MATTHEW XVI. 21—23.

Isaiah xl. Verses 1, 2. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.*

The loss of comfort is no small loss. God would have his people happy. They are in the best condition for serving him, and less likely to be overcome by the temptations of the world, when the joy of the Lord is their strength. Therefore, three times over he bids his ministers comfort his people. O Triune Jehovah, help thy servant now to fulfil this commission!

2. *And cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,*

After all, beloved, you have not to fight your own battles. Under one aspect, you may have to do so; but the great fight is already over, that fight which is so much greater than all others, that the lesser ones are scarcely worthy of the name of warfare. You have but to scatter the foes whom your great Captain has vanquished, and to march boldly onward because he has cleared the way before you.

2. *That her iniquity is pardoned:*

Oh, when that is the case, what does it matter about the warfare? Brethren, if you have a sense of sin forgiven, you may well bear the trials of the way. The sting is gone from death itself when sin is pardoned; and, therefore, it is certainly gone from life as well.

2. *For she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.*

If the Lord's ancient people could thus be comforted in their seasons of sorrow, how much more may we be cheered when we think of all the blessing which has come to us through the sorrows of our great covenant Head! All is settled now. "It is finished," was our Saviour's cry from the cross. Our debts are all paid, so we may well be comforted.

3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

You have not to turn the wilderness into a garden; you have only to make "a highway for our God." It is the presence of God that you want, O sorrowing soul, O mourning Church! Let the Lord but come to you, and then all shall be well. Your business is to give heed to the cry, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

4. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low:*

That is what must happen to you who are very great and highly exalted, you will have to be made low. But as for the lowly ones, they shall be exalted. It is in this way that God comes to his people, marching over hills that have been overthrown, and over valleys that have been filled up, and levelled to make a highway for the King.

4, 5. *And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

That is the great purpose and end of nature, of providence, and of grace,

that the glory of the Lord may be revealed. It is revealed; but many men do not see it. Yet it is God's purpose that "all flesh shall see it together." Do we all see it, dear friends? Are we not far too apt to take glory to ourselves,—and to make out that we are strong, that we are wise? Ah! too often, that is the case, so it is the Lord's work to put an end to all that folly, so that nothing shall remain but the glory of the Lord, that all flesh may see it, and see nothing else.

6—8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the* LORD *bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

So, you see, there is a withering work to be done by the Spirit of God, withering up all the glory of the flesh to the intent and purpose that the glory of God's Word may be revealed, and that Jehovah himself may be seen in his majesty and might. This is the great battle of all the ages. Sometimes men have set up a golden calf to be worshipped; at other times, blocks of wood and stone; but idolatry is universal wherever man is found. We are all far too prone to trust in something else instead of in God; and God is always jealous of these rivals of his,—these Dagons that dare impiously to stand in the presence of the ark of the Lord.

9. *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

That is the point which we need to reach, where we may see God,—where we may be conscious of his presence,—where we may trust in his grace,—where we may lean on his arm. And, oh! we need to have the voice very much lifted up before we can hear this cry, "Behold your God!" We run after this sight, and that, and the other, and forget him who alone is worth seeing. "Behold your God," you who are sorrowing, you who are perplexed, you who are sorely burdened, behold your God, and you shall be strengthened and comforted.

10, 11. *Behold, the Lord* GOD *will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

This is what the good Shepherd is constantly doing. Nobody else can do it. He alone can protect the weak, who are his lambs, and succour those whose inward sorrows bring them into deep distress; and there is nothing which he cannot do, for he is omnipotent. Then, why do you not trust him? You remember what the Lord himself says, by the mouth of Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Now comes a verse by which we are taught the greatness of God:—

12. *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*

Who has done all this but God? Then, after that, is there anything too

hard for him to do? And who is so worthy of your confidence as this Omnipotent One? Oh, let the thunder of his power make you ashamed of the weakness of your unbelief!

13, 14. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the* LORD, *or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?*

Dost thou want greater wisdom than his? Art thou perplexed because thou canst not understand all mysteries? What would thy wisdom and understanding be if they were placed side by side with his? A single drop of water, compared with all seas and oceans, has a larger magnitude than all thy powers have compared with the greatness of thy God, and all his glorious attributes. Trust him, then, and let him lead thee whithersoever he willeth.

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,*

All the nations—Jews and Gentiles, the vast multitudes of China, and India, and all other nations,—all these are but as a drop of a bucket,—the one drop that trembles on the bucket's brim when all the rest of the water is gone.

15. *And are counted as the small dust of the balance:*

That little imperceptible dust that does not turn the scale of an ordinary balance, and for which you would need the most sensitive scales in order to discover its presence. That is all that the whole of the nations of the earth are in comparison with God; yet, sometimes, we fancy that one man is so great that all must give way to him. Whereas, if we trust in God, and think as God thinks, a whole nation will be to us as a drop of a bucket, or as the unseen dust of the balance. Well did Dr. Watts sing:—

"Great God! how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to thee.

"Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead."

15, 16. *Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.*

There, set Libanus itself on a blaze; let all its forests of cedar be the wood to burn the sacrifice, and all its cattle the victims upon the altar; yet are they but as a child's toys in the sight of the all-glorious Jehovah. There is nothing in them that can satisfy his infinite heart.

17, 18. *All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

Now, children of God, do not miss the meaning of this passage by saying that it relates to the heathen. True, it does; but not to them alone. When the heathen liken God to stocks and stones, they scarcely act worse than some of his people do; for, sometimes, we do not even think as well of our God as we do of ourselves. Ye, being evil, are constantly supplying your children's wants, yet you doubt whether God will supply yours. You liken him to an ungenerous father, or to a forgetful and faithless friend, one who changes with the wind. Oh, dear friends, have you not so likened him? If so, let the rebuke to the heathen be also a rebuke to you.

This is what the heathen do:—

19, 20. *The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation—*

No precious metal,—

20—26. *Chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high,—*

Look at the stars,—

26, 27. *And behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the* LORD, *and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

You see, it is another form of that same sin of forgetting God, or thinking little of God. It does not matter much whether it takes the form of atheism or of idolatry, it is the same kind of evil; it is getting away from God, or neglecting him; and, in our case, when we get depressed in spirit, and fancy that God forgets us, it is the same sinful nature working in the same sinful manner. May God help us to forsake every form of evil!

28, 29. *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the* LORD, *the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint;—*

Come now, faint heart, and swoon away at his feet. Come to him in all your weakness; do not try to conceal it, but trust him to remove it: "He giveth power to the faint;"—

29. *And to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

What a mercy it is to have no might that God may increase our strength! What a curse it is to be so strong in yourself that you do not go to the Strong for strength!

30. *Even the youths—*

With all their vigour: "Even the youths"—

30. *Shall faint and be weary, and the young men—*

Though more confirmed in strength: "the young men"—

30, 31. *Shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the* LORD *shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles;*

That is their first mode of progression, in which, perhaps, there is more flight than is good for them: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles;"—

31. *They shall run, and not be weary;*

That is an improvement upon the flying; but they shall still further improve their pace, for running is not the best pace at which a man can go. Enoch did not run with God, but he walked with him; and so, as we grow

in grace, we shall advance, from flying to running, and from running to walking. This is the wise, sober, steady mode of going to heaven.

31. *And they shall walk, and not faint.*

The Lord help us to attain to that blessed rate of progression, in which we shall "walk, and not faint," for his dear Son's sake!

Matthew xvi. Verse 21. *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

He had previously spoken somewhat darkly concerning his death; but it was so sad and so strange a revelation to his disciples that they could not think he really meant quite what he said. But now he began definitely and plainly to tell them about the future, and even to enter into details concerning his death and resurrection. He knew all that the work of redemption would involve for him; he had counted the cost; but—

"When the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

It must have been very saddening, but, at the same time, very profitable for the minds of the apostles to be led by their Lord in this direction.

22. *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

The margin reads, "Pity thyself, Lord," as though Peter meant to say, "God grant, of his infinite mercy, that this may not be true! How can it be that such an one as thou art should die?" He probably thought that Christ's death would be the end of his kingdom, the ruin of all his people's hopes, the quenching of the light of Israel; so, in his zeal for his Master's cause, he cried, "This shall not be unto thee."

23. *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Notice the contrast between the 18th verse and the 23rd. In the 18th verse, Christ had said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church;" and here he is saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." I do not understand our Lord to have called Peter Satan, but to have looked right through Peter, and to have seen Satan standing behind him, and making use of the apostle to be his spokesman. The best of men may sometimes serve the devil's turn better than a bad man would. He may speak, through those who love the Lord, words which are clean contrary to the mind of Christ. So Christ sees Satan lurking, as in an entrenchment, behind Peter, and he says, "Get thee behind me: thou art an offence unto me." The idea of pitying himself—the thought of shirking the task upon which he had entered—was offensive to him. There was a savour about it of the things of men,—of self, and of self-saving, instead of self-denial, and generous, disinterested, Godlike self-sacrifice. Oh, that we would always speak, as Christ did on this occasion, whenever anything is proposed to us by which we should avoid the cross that he intends us to carry! When anyone wants us to moderate our zeal, or to tone down our opinions, lest we should have to suffer for our faithfulness, let us reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan." What has a soldier of the cross to do with avoiding the battle with evil? He should be ever ready for the good fight of faith. What has an heir of heaven to do with the saving of himself? Let him say, with the apostle Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUT OF NOTHING COMES NOTHING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 7TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, October 21st, 1880.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."—Job xiv. 4.

JOB considered himself to be unclean in the sight of God; yet, if we speak the plain truth about him, we must say that he was as clean as any man who lived in that age, or, indeed, in any other. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit, in this very Book, that he "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." We have also the practical confirmation by the devil of the same fact; for, when the Lord said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" he could not deny it, but could only insinuate that there was an evil motive at the back of the patriarch's uprightness: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Sometimes, the unwilling acknowledgment of an enemy is a stronger proof than the hearty declaration of a friend, and it was so in Job's case. He was one of the best, truest, sincerest, cleanest men to be found throughout the whole world; yet he called himself unclean, and probably he did so because, just in proportion as a man becomes really pure, he discovers his own impurity. The impure man has a very low standard of what true holiness is, and possibly he thinks that he comes nearly up to it; or, if not, he tries to lower his standard down to his own level; but the man who is really pure in heart has a very high ideal of what truth is, and uprightness is, and holiness is; and because his ideal is so high, he feels that he has not yet attained to it; and he thinks more of the distance between his present condition and his idea of perfection than he does of all that he has as yet attained. Such a man says, with the apostle Paul, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It is always a bad sign when a man begins to think exceedingly well of himself. I had rather, a great deal, hear a man complain,

and cry out before God, under a deep sense of humiliation, than hear him utter a single word that reveals a spirit of complacency with his own condition. What we are in Christ, is a thing to be perfectly satisfied with and rejoiced over; for, in Christ, believers are justified and accepted; but as for what we are in our own personal character, the very best of us must still feel that there is much over which we have to mourn. However nearly we may have approached to the example of Christ, that very nearness will make us the more regret the points in which we have fallen short of a complete imitation of him; and we shall still cry out, "O wretched man that I am,—blessed to have come so far on the way of holiness, but wretched that I have not gone further still,—who shall deliver me from the present thraldom of the body of this death? Who shall perfectly emancipate me from its control, that I may live wholly unto God, and be holy even as God is holy?"

Then, as Job considered himself an unclean thing, we need not wonder that he should have despaired of ever, by his own power, bringing out of himself anything that should be perfectly clean in God's sight, and we need not be surprised at his question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" As I have already reminded you, what he brought out of himself in his daily life was clean in the eyes of men; he vindicated his character, against false accusations, with great earnestness and sincerity, and with considerable warmth of temper; for he felt that it was clean before men, yet he was conscious that it was not clean before God. There are two kinds of perfection; there is a measure of cleanness in which a man may wash his hands in innocency, and say to his fellow-men, "I am free from any transgression," as the prophet Samuel fearlessly challenged all Israel to produce anyone whom he had defrauded or oppressed, "And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness." That ought to be the character of every Christian man,—he should be white as the driven snow, aiming ever to be honest and upright in all his dealings with his fellow-creatures. But, beloved, God's judgment, and yours, and mine, concerning cleanness, differ very greatly. Our weights and scales are rough and coarse, though they suffice for the common purposes of the life we live here on earth; but God's scales will turn if a single hair falls upon them, the small dust of the balance will move them. Nay; the metaphor is not a perfect one all round; I use it, but I make a reservation concerning it. God does not regard any sin of ours as the small dust of the balance, and his judgment is right judgment. He doth not find much evil where there is but little, for the great evil is there all the while; and because God is perfectly holy, he discovers what our impure eyes cannot perceive. In contrast with his absolutely perfect holiness, none of us are clean. Job's friend Bildad said, "The stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm?" And Eliphaz said, "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his

angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" The purity of God is incorruptible; and when we look at ourselves, we despair of ever attaining to such perfection as his without his help.

I. Now, coming to our text, I want first to speak of SOME MATTERS OF IMPOSSIBILITY IN NATURE,—the bringing of clean things out of unclean ones.

And the first matter of impossibility I will mention is, that there should be born into this world *a pure child, perfectly holy in nature, from impure parents*: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Whatever the new-fangled teaching may say about the old-fashioned doctrine that we are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, that doctrine is true. It matters not who may deny its truth, it still stands fast, for it is founded upon the rock of the Inspired Word of God. Men will never be able to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. An unfallen Adam and Eve would have had an unfallen progeny; but fallen men and women, such as we are, will certainly have for our children those whose tendencies are towards evil. Though there is, in every child, much that is very beautiful, which a mother's eye is quick to detect, yet who that has carefully watched his own offspring can fail to have seen that temper which, sometimes early in life, becomes more terrible than it does in grown-up people? I have seen little children turn black in the face through passion; yet, when reason comes to them, they will learn somewhat to control themselves. The tendency to evil is there all the while; and according to the disposition of the child, it displays itself sooner or later. David said, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Certainly, a child, who has never heard a lie, will often lie very terribly; and various forms of deception will be practised by those who have had the best possible example set before them. If any of you think that you have a perfect child, you will find yourselves grievously mistaken; the time will come when you will discover that evil is lurking there as it is in you the father, or in you the mother, and it will only need a suitable opportunity to display itself. It will scarcely need fostering by ill companions; but even in a godly household, where the atmosphere of piety abounds, sin will grow up in the child as naturally as weeds grow in a garden that is left to itself.

If you leave a plot of ground to itself, you do not find that there will come out of it vegetables fit for your table; and you will not find that a child, left to himself, will produce virtues and excellences acceptable to God. No, evil is inherent in the heart of man, and, being there, in due time it cometh out of him. From our very birth, we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." It was an apostle who said that, but it was Christ himself who said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." The children of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Except a man be born again, (from above,) he cannot see the kingdom of God," for his nature is evil.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

That, then, is one matter of impossibility,—the birth of innocent children from fallen parents.

The next is, *the bringing of a pure nature out of the depraved nature of any one individual.* Here are we, possessed of an impure nature; but cannot we, by some means, educate impurity into purity? Our whole system is depraved; but cannot we, somehow or other, out of depravity develop excellence, love to God, consecration to his service? No, never. You may, if you like, watch a skeleton till your eyes ache, but you will never see a trace of life springing up within those ribs of death. You may look at a foul stream as it comes rolling along, and you may stir it to its depths, or you may alter its channel; but as long as the source, from which the stream flows, is impure, the water that comes from it will be impure too, and it will not be able to purify itself. So, human nature may pass through as many processes as you please; but as long as it remains merely human nature, and God the Holy Spirit has not transformed it, and made it like the nature of God, it will still be an impure thing, and no clean thing can come out of it.

"But," says someone, "can we not change human nature by reading the Bible to it?" Ah! you may read the Bible to the devil as long as you like, but it will not make an angel of him; and you cannot change a sinner into a saint simply by reading the Scriptures to him. "Can we not preach him into a right state of heart?" asks another. You might as well hope to preach a lion into a lamb as to change the unholy into the holy without the power of God. "Oh, but!" say others, "we can surely do a great deal with him by example, by repression, and by encouragement." Of course you can affect him morally; but, with regard to the great spiritual matter of being clean in the sight of God, all that you can do will avail about as much as when they sought to wash the blackamoor white. The tubs were full of hot water, soap in abundance was used, the brushes were worn out with the efforts of the scrubbers, but the black man came out as black as he went in. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots; and out of an unclean thing cleanness cannot come. God must work the miracle by his grace, for of itself evil will produce only evil, and not good.

Another impossibility also follows on the heels of this one; that is, *pure acts cannot come out of an impure heart.* A man, who is what he is by nature, unrenewed by grace, may do a great deal that is very excellent. Some of the most beautiful of the virtues towards man will grow in unrenewed hearts. It has sometimes been asserted that only true religion can produce a beautiful character towards man; but I think it must be admitted, by all who know the facts of the case, that such a statement as that is not true. Generosity, honesty, heroism, and other virtues and excellences have been displayed by men who have been unbelievers, and even by those who have disregarded God altogether; and there has often been much that we have been bound to admire in men to whom scepticism was all the religion that they had. We must say as

much as that in fairness to those from whom we greatly differ; but it is quite another matter when we begin to talk about their conduct towards God, that cleanness of heart which God has a right to demand from all his creatures. These men may be able to pay off their pence creditors, the people who are round about them; but it is a different thing when we bring them face to face with the great Creditor, their Maker to whom their enormous debt is due. As long as a man is not right in the sight of God, as long as his nature is unrenewed by grace, nothing that he does can be pleasing to God, there is nothing in it that God can accept. He may even have an outward religiousness of a certain kind; but he presents his religion to God with such filthy hands that there are dirty marks all over it. He may even bring to God a sacrifice out of his flock; but you can see that the motive of doing it, the way of doing it, and the pride in having done it, spoil it all. He comes before God with a reverent appearance, but with a wandering heart. He sings lustily with his mouth, but his soul is not really praising and magnifying the Lord. He bows his head when others pray, and he seems to be praying, too; but there is no confession of sin, there is nothing that can be acceptable with God; nor can there be until God has changed the nature of the man. That which comes out of an impure heart, however pure it may seem, is impure; it is tainted with the smell of the evil place from which it arose.

There is another impossibility over which some of us have often to groan; that is, *perfect actions cannot be performed by imperfect* men. I think that you, who love the Lord, must know what it is to grieve over things over which you have at first rejoiced. For instance, I have preached a sermon, I have been earnest in delivering the truth, I have had liberty in proclaiming it, and I have felt hopeful that God would bless it. But I know what it is to get home, and to lie upon my bed, and think over what I omitted to say, and how I ought to have said it in a better way,—the way in which I think I should say it if I could get up then, and call you all together, and tell it over again; and so I cry out, "Lord, I thought I had brought forth a clean thing, but I find that I have not; and I have learned that it is not possible to bring a perfectly clean thing out of that which is unclean." However cleansed the human heart may be, by divine grace, yet there remaineth still so much of impurity about it that "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." There is about all that cometh from us imperfection, infirmity, fault, flaw, much to weep over, much to deplore; and the wonder is that God accepts it at all. Yet it is no wonder when we recollect that we and our service are "accepted in the Beloved," and there is enough grace and virtue in him to make even such poor creatures as we are, and such poor works as we present, to be fully acceptable for his dear sake.

One more phase of this difficulty and impossibility is this,—"*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*" *in another person?* If you believe in human ability, I wish you would addict yourself to the effort to convert souls. If you think that you have the power to convert a soul, choose even a little child, and set to work

upon it. I could pick you out some men whom I know, and some women, too, upon whom I should like you to try your wonderful sword. If they do not laugh you to scorn, and turn the edge of your weapon, I am greatly mistaken. God knows how to thrust at them so that every stroke shall tell; for he hath said, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." But, apart from that divine power, who among us can convert a single soul? Who can dart faith into the unbelieving heart? Who can fetch a penitential tear out of that stolid impenitent soul? Who can beget love to Christ in that chill, indifferent heart? Ah! often have God's servants had to cry with the Reformer, "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon;" and they have had to go home, and confess that no human being can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

These are all matters of impossibility in nature which the text sets before us.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice CERTAIN SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION, FOR EVERY ONE OF US, that arise out of a right contemplation of this subject. First, we see here that *we are unclean by nature.* Do we all know that it is so with us? Have we made this great discovery? Has the Spirit of God taught us this humbling truth? Are we in the track of the footsteps of the flock? If so, we shall say, with Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;" and, with David, we shall confess that we were "shapen in iniquity," and conceived in sin. It is well for us to deal with our birth sin, our original depravity, and the natural tendencies of our spirit; we do not get to the truth about ourselves till we get there. Well, now, do we all know ourselves to be naturally unclean? It is well to know that, sad as the truth is.

Then the next consideration is, that *we must be clean if we are to be accepted by God.* We never can have fellowship with God while we remain unclean. We may have a measure of fellowship with God when he hath cleansed us by the precious blood of Christ, but that fellowship will never be perfect till the last trace of sin has been removed from us. Absolutely perfect fellowship with the thrice-holy Jehovah will only come to us above because then we shall be absolutely clean, and shall be with him, and near him, and like him, and then we shall have become akin to him in holiness. We must be cleansed if we are ever to be in his presence in glory. There is no possibility of getting to heaven foul and stained with sin; there is no possibility of sitting amongst the white-robed hosts above in these rags of ours. This filthiness of ours must be put away somehow, but how can it be put away?

The fact that we cannot work this great change ourselves *will not relieve us of our responsibility.* When a man becomes so much a liar that he cannot speak the truth, or so dishonest that he cannot keep his hands from picking and stealing, when the very nature is defiled, it doth not excuse the acts which the guilty one commits. Although we cannot cleanse our heart, the Word of God contains the plain command, "Wash you, make you clean;" so that the

responsibility still rests upon us, although we are totally unable to obey the injunction.

It is quite clear that *we cannot, in our own strength, do this needful work of cleansing.* If any man asserts that he can purify himself, I would answer, "Yes, you may cleanse yourself from many faults, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, from dishonesty, from drunkenness, from unchastity,—all of which you ought to do; but it is not possible for you to cleanse yourself so as to be perfectly pure in God's sight." Only think a minute, and you will agree with me that it must be so. When you have done all that you can with yourself, will you believe that you are fit to be in God's company, and to speak with him? God is present with us at this moment; but none of you can conceive that, in your present condition, you are fit to have communion with him. If you are in Christ, you are able to commune with the Most High, through Jesus the Mediator; but I am supposing that you are not in Christ, and if that is the case, you must shrink from the presence of the perfectly holy God. And can you ever hope to make yourself fit to stand amongst the glorified spirits above, to walk yon golden streets, and to have fellowship with those who have never sinned, or with those who, having sinned, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Methinks that every reasonable man with any sort of conscience would start back, and say, "I cannot hope to enter there as I am, nor do I think that I can ever make myself fit to go there."

Do you not think that *our wisdom lies in being driven to despair as to ourselves?* I thought I heard somebody say, "This doctrine would drive men to despair." That is exactly what we wish to do, for self-despair is the doorstep of confidence in God. When you know you are helpless, you will then begin to look away from yourself, to find help somewhere else; but as long as ever you can do a stitch of patching and mending, you will not put down the needle, and look to God alone to cover you with the robe of righteousness which the Saviour has wrought. When you realize that you can do nothing, but that an almighty power must be exerted on your behalf, that making you look away from yourself, and bringing you to think of the great God in heaven as your only Helper, is half the battle. So I say that, to drive you to despair of yourself, is the very thing we are aiming at; therefore, would it not be wise for you now to begin to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation? You cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean; so do not attempt the impossible task, but go to him who sitteth upon the throne, and who saith, "Behold, I make all things new."

III. The last point I am going to deal with is, THE PROVISION THAT IS MADE TO MEET THIS HUMAN IMPOSSIBILITY.

Let everyone who desires to be made pure in heart, and clean in the sight of God, recollect, first, that *we have to deal with an omnipotent God.* When you come to him, trusting and resting in Christ, and ask him to be pleased to create in you a new heart,

and to renew a right spirit within you, you are practically expressing your conviction that, what you cannot do for yourself, he can do for you. There is not any lust within you which he cannot subdue; there is not any lack or deficiency of virtue which he cannot supply.

This work is rightly called a creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." It is beautiful to think that, as the Lord made the first creation, fashioning everything out of nothing, and then bringing order out of chaos, so will he come again, and find nothing of good in you, and out of the chaos he will make a new order of things altogether. As when "darkness was upon the face of the deep," he came, and said, "Light be," and light was, so he can come and say to you in all your darkness, "Light be," and there shall be light immediately. He finds nothing in you that can help him, as he found nothing that could help him to make the world; and when he had made it out of nothing, it was all chaotic, and could not help itself. He had to breathe life and light into it; it all came from himself. So it is with you; you are just a lump of helpless matter, a wretched, wicked, condemned one, yet the Lord can come, and put away your sin, and he can form and fashion you after his own pattern. He can give you repentance, and give you faith, and give you every grace; and he can go on to nurture and water all those graces till they come to perfection. He can perfect you in likeness to Christ, so that you shall be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." If you believe in a God almighty to bless and save, you cannot doubt that he is able to do all that I have said. Look not to your own weakness, but by faith look to the divine strength. Consider not so much, poor soul, what you are as what God is, and think of the great new Creator, and commit your soul into his keeping, "as unto a faithful Creator," as the apostle Peter says. That is a blessed word,—a faithful Creator, who will begin to do his creating work anew in such a soul as yours.

Notice, next, that there is a second provision to meet this human impossibility, namely, *the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.* It is not possible for your uncleanness to be put away by anything that you can do. You must say, with Toplady,—

> **"Not the labours of my hands**
> **Can fulfil thy law's demands:**
> **Could my zeal no respite know,**
> **Could my tears for ever flow,**
> **All for sin could not atone:**
> **Thou must save, and thou alone."**

It was God himself that did hang on Calvary's cross; he had taken upon himself human nature, with all its infirmities and all its guilt, though he himself was pure and spotless, and there did he hang in that nature to bleed and die. No one—at least, no human tongue—can tell how great was the atonement that Christ there made for the sin of his guilty creatures; none of us can calculate the price he paid for the redemption of his people; but we know

that, however great is the sin that is to be put away in order to make you clean, it can all be removed by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I am not able to imagine any sin that the blood of Christ could not wash away. See how red is your guilt, mark the scarlet stain; if you were to wash your soul in the Atlantic Ocean, you might incarnadine every wave that washes all its shores, and yet the crimson spots of your transgression would still remain. But plunge into the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"—

and in an instant you are whiter than snow, every speck, and spot, and stain of sin has gone, and gone for ever, and God is thereby glorified. What a blessing it is that, to meet our inability to put away our sin, there is provided a redemption, an atonement, amply sufficient to remove it all for ever! Think, then, not only of your sin, but of your Saviour. Think not so much of your guilt as of his sufferings by which that guilt is put away. Oh, how earnestly would I press this advice upon any who are now troubled about their sin! I would almost say,—Do not look at your sin except you can see the Saviour, too. Do remember that the sin itself shall never condemn you if you trust in Jesus Christ, for he has taken it off all who believe in him, and has cast it into the depths of the sea, to be remembered against them no more for ever. You are saved, however guilty you may have been, as soon as you rely upon the infinite merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

Then you shall be able to sing, with Dr. Watts,—

"'Twas he adorn'd my naked soul,
And made salvation mine!
Upon a poor polluted worm
He makes his graces shine.

"And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around."

There is a third provision made to meet this great emergency. We have spoken of the Father and the Son; but we must not omit to mention *the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Ghost, so often forgotten and slighted, is the great Worker in the cleansing and renewing of man's nature. That blessed Spirit has the whole power of the Godhead, and wherever he works effectually, he

convinces of sin, making men see the guilt and evil of it; but he also convinces them of righteousness, so that they see that there is a righteousness to be had, and they learn how they may righteously obtain it. The Holy Spirit brings Christ near, reveals him to the heart, and then he enables the sinner to see the suitability of Christ to him. The Spirit also enables the man to see that he may trust Christ; nay, he goes further, and enables the poor guilty soul actually to trust him who came to save him. One of the first proofs of his working in the heart is the production of faith there; then, when he has wrought that grace in the soul, he helps the man to pray, to overcome temptation, to engage in holy service. The Spirit helps us all the way through. He creates all that is good within us. He works in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" and wherever the Holy Spirit comes, he acts like the fire that consumes the dross, and purifies the metal.

So, what thinkest thou, poor unclean soul, if God the Holy Ghost were to take thee in hand, could not he make thee clean? Oh, if he were to come now, in all that wondrous power of his, could he not burn up the wood, and hay, and stubble of sin that is within thee? There have been men, who seemed to be lost to every noble thought, who nevertheless have been lifted up to heroic effort by the power of the Spirit of God. There have been others, who were sunken in vice, in ignorance, in drunkenness, and every kind of crime, yet, they have been washed, cleansed, sanctified, made saints of God on earth, and perfect spirits above, by the power of the Holy Ghost when he has come upon them, and applied the blood of Christ to their heart and conscience. What he has done for others, he can do for you; and I do pray you not so much to look at your power to will as at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you to will; not so much at your power to do, which is nothing, but at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you what he would have you do. Recollect what I have often told you, that the confidence of a man in himself can never be of any good to him; it is like the anchor while it is on board the ship. What is the good of it there? It only increases the weight of the vessel as long as it is lying on the deck, or hanging over the side of the ship. You may throw it where you like,—throw it down the hold, but it won't hold the vessel so. Throw it into the captain's cabin, hang it on the mast; what good is it? As long as it is in the ship, it is of no service. The thing to be done with the anchor is, heave it overboard. Splash! Down it goes; listen to the clatter of the chain; now, when the anchor gets a good grip somewhere out of sight, then it holds the ship. So, throw your hope out of yourself, get it away from yourself, do not let it rest in yourself,—it will help to sink you if you do;—let it go down into the unseen, let it grasp Christ, let it get a firm hold of him, and of his finished work, and of God the Omnipotent, and of the ever-blessed Spirit of God. Now your vessel will outride the storm, and all will be well.

Some people, who ought to be better informed, are quite ignorant of the work of the Holy Spirit. I knew a man, who attended at a certain church, and on one occasion he heard a good

gospel sermon. I do not know who was the author of it, but the parson who preached it certainly was not. This gospel sermon had so cut into the hearer's conscience that, when he went home, he could not rest. The next morning, he went off to the clergyman, and he said to him, "Sir, I am greatly troubled by what you said yesterday." "My dear fellow," replied the parson, "I never meant to say anything to give you a moment's uneasiness, I am sure; and if I did so, I am truly sorry for it." "Oh, sir!" said the man, "but your sermon did give me dreadful uneasiness. You preached about our being born again; tell me, sir, what it is to be born again." "Well," said the minister, "I was educated at Cambridge, but I do not know what it is to be born again, and I do not think there is any need for you to trouble yourself at all about the matter. I wish I had never bought that sermon, or read it, for it has proved to be a troublesome sermon to two or three others beside yourself, but I will never preach it again, I will promise you that." Ah! but our poor awakened friend could not be quieted in that fashion, for that sermon had dragged off every coverlet from him, and the bed was too short for him to stretch himself upon it, and he did not rest until he had found out a true minister of Christ, who was able to point out to him the way to obtain peace with God through believing in Jesus. Then, how glad he was to think that the clergyman had, even unintentionally, made him uncomfortable! How glad he was that he, though in ignorance, had taken away his first false peace, that God might come in, and establish the second, —the peace that does not lie in ourselves, but in Christ,—the peace that is not founded upon an assumption of our own personal righteousness, but upon the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

All that I have been saying shows *the fitness of this gospel for sinners.* This gospel encourages the man who had given up all hope, wakes him up to a wondrous consciousness of the possibilities of his purified manhood, and sets before him the glorious prospect of making something of his immortality. When he gets to heaven, he will not throw up his cap, and cry, "Glory be to myself! Have not I done it well?" No, no; that is how Pharisees might act if they could get to heaven by their own works; but when God is going to save a sinner, he first puts him down in the lowest class, and reads him a very humbling lesson. He makes him feel that he is nothing but sin, and that he can do nothing but sin; and then he says to him, "Look unto me; I will work the change that needs to be wrought in you." Then Christ comes in, and says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; rest in me;" and the Spirit of God saith, "I will work in thee a new creation, and make all things anew in thee;" and, all along, as the work of grace is really wrought in the man, he continues to bless and to magnify the name of the Lord. Thus, that spirit of gratitude and adoration, which is the very essence of virtue, becomes the underlying rock that supports a noble character; and all things that are of good report are created and nurtured by this glorious gospel of the blessed God.

If there is anybody who prefers any other sort of gospel, I am sure I do not want to rob him of it; if he can get any comfort out of it, let him keep it. But as for me, I am so weak, so sinful, so undone, that I commit my soul to the God of grace, and nothing but "free grace and dying love" will suffice for me. Many of us stand together upon this matter, as we have done for many a year, and I believe we shall continue to do so more and more as our age increases, and our hair gets grey, for we did not know so much about grace when we were lads as we know now, and we keep on learning more and more of it every day that we live. What we want is grace, *grace*, GRACE, and may God grant it to every one of us! May there be in us nothing of self, and all of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—530, 51 (Version II.), 486.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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FOUNTAINS OF REPENTANT TEARS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 14TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 24th, 1880.

"And when he thought thereon, he wept."—Mark xiv. 72.

TRUE repentance is always the gift of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Man, left to himself, continues in sin. If he turns from his iniquity, it is because God turns him. By nature, his mind is set on mischief; and if that mind be changed, as it is in genuine repentance, it must be because the Lord himself has changed it. That repentance which a man works in himself, without the Spirit of God, will turn out to be a repentance that needs to be repented of; but that godly sorrow for sin, which the Spirit of God produces in the heart, is a sure indication of spiritual life, and the constant attendant of saving faith. Whosoever unfeignedly repents of sin, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved man; he shall be among the blessed ones in that day when Christ comes to judge the quick and the dead; and he shall be among the glorified for ever.

Yet, while repentance is wrought in men by the Spirit of God, he generally makes use of means to produce that result. In the case of Peter, the agency employed was thought,—thought about his sin: "When he thought thereon, he wept." There is no doubt that multitudes of sinners have been led to repentance in this way; and, in some respects, this must be the universal way by which the Spirit of God conducts men to the goal of true penitence. As long as they live carelessly and thoughtlessly, they go on in their evil ways; but if they are stopped in their mad career, if they are made to consider, if they begin to think over their sin, if God, the Holy Ghost, convinces them of the guilt of it, he uses that thought and conviction to lead them to trust in Jesus Christ. The remembrance of sin committed is the Holy Spirit's frequent if not constant method of bringing men to weep over their wrong-doing, and to turn from it.

I find that the Greek word, which is here rendered "he thought thereon," is rather difficult of translation in order to give the full meaning of the original. There is, in the expression used by Mark,

some idea of throwing or casting, so that some have even read the passage, "When he muffled up his face," as though they thought it was implied that he cast something over himself so as to hide his face for shame at his great transgression; but others, as I believe much more correctly, think that our translation comes near enough to the idea of the writer, who wanted to convey the impression that Peter cast his thoughts concerning what he had done one upon another, brought before his mind the circumstances in which he stood, and heaped them up one upon another; and, as he did this, and considered his sin in detail, and brought out its true and gross guiltiness, then it was that he began to weep. Without, however, insisting upon the absolute accuracy of this particular translation, we take the text as it stands: "When he thought thereon, he wept."

I. First, LET US STUDY PETER'S CASE, AND USE IT FOR OUR OWN INSTRUCTION. The details of this sad story are familiar to you, yet I may remind you of them in order that we may see in how many points we have been like him.

As Peter heard the cock crow, he thought, first, that he had actually done what Christ had said he would do, *he remembered that he had denied his Lord.* That which had seemed impossible to him had, nevertheless, been done three times. He would not believe even his dear Lord and Master when he told him that it would be so; but now it was literally the fact that Peter, one of the first to follow Christ, one who had even walked on the water to go to Jesus, one who had seen Christ's miracles,—Peter, the most earnest and enthusiastic of Christ's followers, always to the front, ready to brave anything for his Lord,—Peter, who, with his sword, cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest,—he realizes that he is the very same man, and that he has actually denied his Master, declaring positively that he was not one of Christ's disciples. "When he thought thereon, he wept," as well he might. Ah, what castles in the air had vanished! What self-confidence had passed away!

Then, as he looked to the end of the hall where he could see his Master, *he reflected upon the excellence of the Master whom he had denied.* Ah, Peter! thou hast denied the best, the most loving, the most lovely, the most tender, the most generous, the most compassionate, the most self-denying, the most pure, the most heavenly of leaders. If there had been some fault in him, if he had played thee false, if he had been unkind to thee, if he had promised thee a wage, and had not paid thee, or if he had lied unto thee, and thou hadst found him out, or if thou hadst seen some infirmity or imperfection about him when thou didst watch him in his privacy, thou mightest be excused. But to deny such a Master,—well mayest thou weep, and cover thy face for very shame. He is perfection, yet he permitted thee to follow him,—thou who art such a poor untrustworthy creature. How couldst thou say, "I am not his disciple;" and say it three times over, so positively and so plainly, when, but a little while ago, it was thy joy, thy glory, thy delight, humbly to follow in his footsteps, and to call him Master and Lord?

Then, next, *he recollected the position in which his Lord had*

placed him. Peter, thou art not only a disciple, thou art one of the twelve apostles. Thy Master singled thee out, at least on one occasion, and spoke to thee words that put thee in a place of great eminence in his Church. Thou wast endowed with the power to work miracles, thou wast exalted above the seventy evangelists, and called to be one of the twelve pillars of the future Church to be built upon Christ Jesus. Yet thou hast denied him. Oh, how this thought must have struck his heart, like the point of a dagger, for, by so much as Christ trusts us, by so much is it a shameful thing for us to betray that trust; by so much as Christ puts honour upon us by using us, by just so much is it an intolerable shame that we should put him to shame, and grieve him by denying that we are his. We can do this by our actions as well as by our words. You can deny Christ quite as much by acting inconsistently as by standing up, and boldly saying, "I know not the man." O brethren, if Christ has highly favoured any of us, and used us in his service in any degree, and yet we have denied him, the recollection of our sin ought to cut us to the quick!

Moreover, *Peter remembered that his Lord had favoured him with very special intercourse with himself.* Christ took only three of his followers into the silent chamber where the daughter of Jairus lay dead. When he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, "Talitha cumi," and the maid arose, there were only three pairs of eyes, out of all his disciples, that saw that miracle, for "he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John." Then, up on the mountain where the Lord was transfigured, and his garments became whiter than any fuller could make them, and the glory of the Lord shone upon the Well-beloved, there were only three disciples who were permitted to be there; and Peter was one of those who "were with him in the holy mount." And in the garden of Gethsemane, when eight of the apostles were left as a picket to watch at the gate, there were three who accompanied the Saviour to within a stone's throw of the place where he agonized, and "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" and amongst the three who constituted the innermost body-guard of their suffering King was Peter. Yet, with the memories of Tabor and Gethsemane upon him, he had denied that he even knew Christ. Do you wonder that, as he thought thereon, he wept? Ungodly men, if they make a confession of sin, speak of it in the mass, as Pharaoh did when he said to Moses, "I have sinned;" but godly men are not content to act like that. They enter into details, and in their confession they dwell upon the minute particulars of their guilt. They seek out that which will aggravate the sin; or, rather, will set it in its true light when they are making confession of it before God; and I have no doubt that Peter mentioned this as a great aggravation of his iniquity, that he had seen the Saviour in those choicer moments when only the elect out of the elect, the very *élite* of the apostolic band, were permitted to be present; and yet he had denied his Lord.

There was still more for Peter to think of; *he recollected that he had been solemnly forewarned by his Master.* Jesus had said to him,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And he had also said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." No warning could be more explicit than that. If a man plunges into a ditch when he is told where it is, or puts his foot into a trap when it is pointed out to him, or, being warned of his weakness in a particular direction, nevertheless takes no heed, he really doubles the guilt of his offence, for he has sinned against special light. You do not often have the full light of the bull's eye lantern turned upon a weakness as Christ turned it upon Peter's. He told him plainly what he was going to do; yet the boastful man declared that he would not do it, and then went straight away and did it. This thought might well make him weep. The tones of his confident affirmation that he would never deny his Master must have still lingered in his ear; yet he could also hear the sad echo of the denial which he had so grievously made; and, therefore, "when he thought thereon, he wept." Why, it must have come to his mind that he had flatly contradicted Christ, and that he had put himself before all his brethren, and claimed to be better, more steadfast than they were: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," and, further, he said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." He had to eat his own words, and to confess that he had proved false to his own most solemn declarations, and that might well cause him to weep as he thought over it.

Yet there was something even worse than this; *Peter mourned that he should have denied his Master under such circumstances*,—that he should have left him when he most needed a friend and companion. When everybody else forsook Christ, Peter not only forsook him, but he denied that he even knew him. If a man is really a friend, he certainly will stand by his friend when others turn away from him; yet there stands the blessed Lamb of God, buffeted, mocked, delivered up by cruel men to be crucified, and it is at such a time that Peter denies him,—denies him when he is about to lay down his life for Peter and for all his loved ones,—denies him when he is owning us, and standing before the tribunal in our stead to suffer for our sin. O cruel Peter, if thou didst mean to deny thy Master, why didst thou do it just now when he has no one to cling to him? Surely, it would have been more noble on thy part to have said, "I am one of his followers. Nail me to a cross at his side, and let me die faithful to my Lord." That would have been a speech more worthy of Peter at his best.

He also thought of the repetitions and aggravations of his offence, and this made him weep. In addition to denying his Master, he told a positive lie, and repeated it again and again. He said to the damsel, "I know not what thou sayest;" and twice he said, "I know not the man." Now, that was an altogether unnecessary lie, because I should think that a very large majority of the Jews knew Christ. Jesus of Nazareth must have been so famous as a Teacher and as a Miracle-worker that many a man, who was not one of his

followers, could not have said, "I do not even know him." It was bad enough for Peter to deny that he was Christ's disciple, but to say, "I know not the man," was a needless aggravation of the falsehood that he had uttered. What is worst of all, "he began to curse and to swear." Liars generally seem to think that they will not be believed upon their bare word, and they fancy that, if they will swear, then they will be believed. This is not the case, by any means; for, if you are wise, the moment you hear a man swear, you will know that he is telling a lie, for a profane swearer practically says, "I need not mind telling a lie to man, for I am not afraid to swear in the presence of God." You never need believe a man who swears; you may know that he also lies. But Peter, having the common notion that to blaspheme and to use strong language would be convincing, began to curse and to swear. Do not alter these words, so as to make it appear that Peter used very gentle and polite expressions. He did nothing of the kind, he used the strongest form of cursing that he could, for the Greek word is tantamount to "anathema." He anathematized himself, invoked upon himself the heaviest curses,—as profane people usually do,—in order that those who stood around might believe him when he said that he did not know Christ.

This cursing and swearing shows how very low Peter had fallen. When a man swears, you may, as a rule, be quite sure that he does not know Christ. Peter may have thought within himself, "There never was a disciple of Christ yet who took to swearing; so, if I swear, they will think at any rate that I am not one." So he borrows, out of the mouth of the profane, language which did not belong to him, and he utters it in order that they may really think that he is no disciple of Christ. When the cock crew, and he thought of all this, he might well weep. Why, this is the man who said, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles." This is the man who said to Jesus, across the stormy sea, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." This is the same man; yet he has been cursing, and swearing, and denying Christ. When he turned all that over in his mind, it is no wonder that he wept.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US STUDY OUR OWN LIVES, AND USE THE EXERCISE FOR OUR FURTHER HUMILIATION.

I will begin with *the backslider*. There are, alas! many who have denied Christ in this way. After having followed him for years, they have gradually grown cold, and have turned aside from Christ, their Lord and Master. I want you, dear friend, once a member of this church, yet now a backslider, to turn this matter over very carefully and prayerfully. You were converted in a very remarkable manner; you were, by divine grace, kept for years from sins into which you had formerly plunged; you had much joy and peace in believing; and, sometimes, in the services of the Lord's house, and especially at the communion table, you have felt as if you could sit and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss; you have often talked to your friends and kinsfolk about the bliss that dwells in the name of Jesus your Saviour; yet now you are a backslider! I

cannot go into the details of your sin; perhaps it would not be right or profitable to mention such matters in public; but will you think thereon? I pray you, my brother,—my brother Peter,—think of it; turn over all the details in your mind. This may seem to you to be a very bitter task, but the result of it will be sweet one day. You do not like to remember your sin; but, if you remember it, God will forget it; whereas, if you forget it, God will remember it against you.

Possibly, you were not only a member of the church, but you were a teacher in the Sunday-school. Do you recollect how earnestly you used to teach the children, how anxious you were to lead the little ones to the Saviour, and the intense joy with which you heard their first expressions of confidence in Christ? You remember what zeal and devotion to your Lord and his service you manifested in those happy days which have long gone by; but what a change has come over you! Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so hast thou departed from Christ; and in going astray from him, you have turned aside from happiness, and from peace. You know that you are not happy, you also know that you never can be happy while you continue in your present condition. You have tasted so much of the joy of true religion that you are quite spoilt for the world. A man who lives in sin, and loves it, may get some sort of pleasure out of it; but if, by divine grace, you have once been brought out of the City of Destruction, you cannot go back to it; the place would be a house of bondage to you. There is nothing for you but to go forward; because, as John Bunyan says, there is no armour for the Christian warrior's back, and if you turn round, you will quickly be wounded by the great adversary. You must go forward; there is something within you which tells you that you must; and I believe you will find that it will help you to go forward if you think over the sin that led to your departure from the right road, and that has made you, who used to teach others, now need to be yourself taught.

Is there, in this great throng, one who used to be a preacher of the gospel, a minister of Christ, and who has turned aside? Such men are not as rare as one could desire. I can, at this moment, recall one who used to be prominent in Christ's service, but who now spends his life in serving Satan. We sometimes meet with men who have the drunkard's brand upon their face, and they tell us that they were formerly ministers at such-and-such places. O my brother, my brother Peter! How sad it is that, after having preached Christ, thou hast denied him! Wast thou sincere in thy preaching, or was it a lie? Didst thou do it for the sake of the loaves and fishes? God have mercy upon thee, if thou wast a white-washed hypocrite! But now have the whitewash removed, and appear in your true colours. Possibly, however, you can say, "Yes, I did serve the Lord sincerely; I did long to do good in his name." Then, how did you get down to your present condition? A more important question is,—Do you not wish to get out of that sad state? Oh, I beseech you, seeing that you have disgraced the name of Christ, and put him to open shame, to come back to him at once!

May he make you to hear the cock crow this very hour, awakening your slumbering conscience, and may you go out to weep bitterly over your terrible sin! It is by that Water-gate that many find entrance into the Haven of Peace. It is by deep conviction of guilt, and by true contrition of heart, that they come at last to the feet of Jesus, and find salvation there. Out of such a congregation and such a church as this, it is not possible for anyone to know all that goes on; but we cannot help hearing of one here and another there who gradually turn aside. Grey hairs are upon them, but they perceive them not; and at last they slip back almost imperceptibly, and, by-and-by, they fall into some open sin. Return, O backsliding daughter! Return, O weeping one, to thy Saviour! Return, O prodigal child; come back to thy Father's house and heart! The door of his house is open to receive thee, and his heart is waiting to welcome thee! Return, return, return!

But now I must speak to another class of persons, *those who never did come to Christ.* I wish I had the power to make them think of their past lives until they wept over them. Shall I try to recall some things to the remembrance of careless ones who are still unconverted? I should have to go back a long way with some of you,—back to the old house at home, and to your dear mother,—oh, how she prayed for you, and pleaded with you, while you were a curly-headed boy! You recollect the name that was written in your Bible, and the request that you would read a portion out of it every day when you first went away from home. You little thought, then, that you would ever be a swearer, that you would grow up to be a drunkard, that you would be a Sabbath-breaker and a companion of the wicked. If anybody had foretold that concerning you, in those days, you would have said, with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yet you have done it. Then, do you remember the feelings you had in your early days,—those childish prayers that were sincere in their way,—those simple hymns that you delighted to sing,—the time when you used to get alone, and cry out to God? In those days, if you had had a portrait of yourself, as you now are, shown to you, and it had been said, "That is what you will grow to be," you would not have believed it, would you? They were happy days, but they are gone, never to return. For years after that, you had a very tender conscience, had you not, my brethren? I want you to recollect that fact if it was true in your case. Then, when you first went into overt sin, you were very frightened and alarmed; you can do a great deal that is evil now without being at all troubled, but it was not so with you then, you could not feel easy while engaged in wrong-doing. Why, sometimes, you have been sitting in the playhouse when there has been some lewd word or action, and you have felt that you ought not to be there. You have wondered that the place did not tumble about your ears; but you do not feel like that now. Recollect, too, how you used to start in your sleep through some alarming dream, and how you awakened in terror, and sat up in bed, and wondered how you could live as you did live, without God, and without Christ, and in

constant jeopardy of being cast into hell. I want you to recall all this, and to remember how you seared your conscience, as with a hot iron, till you had burnt out of it the possibilities of sensibility.

I want you also to recollect another thing; and that is, *God's mercy to you.* Try and think about that for a little while. God has been very gracious and kind to some of you. You have prospered in business beyond all your expectations; or you have been helped in times of trouble when you could not have thought that God would aid you. For which of these things do you now neglect him? What has God done to you, or for you, that you should remain his adversary? You recollect that long sickness, when you were brought very low. "Don't talk about it," you say. But I must talk about it, because there was something, that happened then, which ought not to be forgotten. In the middle of that illness, you vowed that, if ever you got well again, you would lead a very different life. You recollect that you promised that; God registered the vow, though you have broken it.

I do not know how to say all that I have in my heart, because there are certain things which I want some of you to think upon, yet I can only just mention them in the public service. Recollect the sins which you committed in which others were involved,—sins which have ruined their souls, and which you never can undo. A man may sometimes sin by himself, as Peter did; but some men sin with others, and drag down others as they sink themselves. It is sad enough to go to hell alone, without having one's arms clasped about others, to be the means of their ruin also; yet there are some men, and some women, who have dragged scores down to hell with them. O God, have mercy on them for this dreadful crime! If any here have been so guilty, I entreat them to think of their great sin, to look it steadily in the face till their eyeballs burn, and to keep on looking at it until the blessed drops of penitential grief shall distil from their eyes. Why should you not think of what you have done? Do you fancy, because you forget it, and draw a veil over it, that it is destroyed? Nay, sirs; you may blot out your memory of the crime, but it is as fresh in God's book of remembrance as if it had been committed only yesterday. "But," you say, "this wrong was done fifty years ago." That does not make any difference; in the sight of God, it is just as though you did it to-night; and it will be the same with you, one of these days, when stern Justice, like a grim chamberlain, with black hands shall draw back the curtains of the bed on which you now securely sleep, and wake you up to see that your sin, unless Christ has buried it in his tomb, is still alive to curse you for ever. Oh, may God help us to think over our sin until we shall realize its guilt, and bow before the thrice-holy Jehovah in true penitence!

Some of you, who have been living in sin, and living without God, are *doubly guilty, because you have sinned against light and knowledge.* You are not like the ignorant multitude, for you have been well-taught and trained from your very childhood. Moreover, many of you have been endowed by God with good common sense and sound judgment, and it has been a difficult matter for you to

continue in your evil course while your own conscience was accusing you. Think of this, because it aggravates your sin, and makes you more guilty than those who have not had such privileges. Some of you have heard the gospel till you know all about it. I cannot tell you anything fresh, and I never try to do so; when we have seen the old truths exercising all their possible power over our hearers, then will be time enough to think of something fresh; but they have not reached that point yet, so we still continue telling "the old, old story." Oh, that the Lord would cause you to remember the sermons that you have heard, the prayer-meetings you have attended, the revival services you have passed through, and the resistance to your own conscience and to the Holy Spirit which some of you have dared to carry on! O my God, I cannot break the rock; I cannot make the water flow from it, either with a rod or by speaking to it! Thou must do the work, O blessed Spirit, if it is to be accomplished! Wilt thou now constrain these people to think of their past lives, until they shall go out of this building to seek a quiet place where they may weep in penitence before the Lord?

III. I have set before you the example of Peter, and have tried to transfer it to your own experience; I must now close by asking you to OBSERVE THE RESULT OF THESE THOUGHTS UPON YOURSELVES.

Alas! *there are some who can think of sin without emotion.* I have tried to make you think of your past sin; do you find that such thoughts lead you to repentance? Has God blessed this meditation to the breaking of your heart, and the humbling of your spirit? If you answer, "No," if you can think over all your past life, and still say, "No, I do not weep; I do not repent;" I am afraid that you are like Judas rather than Peter; I fear lest I have met with the son of perdition, and not an heir of glory.

What can be said for the man who is aware of his sin, but who tries to father it upon somebody else? I have known some who have charged the guilt of their wrong-doing to their constitution; they were so constituted, they say, that they could not help sinning as they did; this is trying to father upon God the guilt of their transgression. "Oh!" says one, "it is my trade that has made me sin; if you had been in my position, you would have been no better than I am." Perhaps so; but you mean that you are not the sinner, it is your trade that is guilty. It does not appear that you are one of those whom Christ came to save, for he came to save sinners, the lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners; and I do not think his call will be extended to your trade; it is you yourself who must be saved, and none but Christ can save you.

"Oh!" says one, "my sin is the result of my circumstances." Whatever your circumstances may have been, whether you were rich or poor, or whatever your condition may have been, if you try to lay the blame of your guilt on your circumstances, I have little hope concerning you. There is no mercy for you, and there will be no forgiveness for you, until you take the blame of your sin upon yourself. "Oh, but I was so tempted!" Yes, I know; that was the old excuse of Adam and Eve. "The woman gave me the fruit

of the tree," said Adam. "The serpent beguiled me," said Eve. Perhaps you also lay the guilt of your evil-doing upon the devil; he is a beast of burden that carries many saddles that never belonged to his back; but I must tell you that, as long as you lay your sin at the devil's door, there is no mercy for you. Plead guilty, I implore you, for you are the guilty party, and then shall you receive the pardon of your transgression. It is the sign of a sad condition of heart when a man, instead of confessing his sin, and owning straight away that he is guilty of it, and lamenting before God that he should have been so wicked, turns round, and casts the blame upon chance, or upon anyone but himself.

I hope, however, that I am addressing *some who are moved to penitence by thinking of their sin.* I hear one say, "As I think over my sin, I am moved to great sorrow. I do desire to have that sin put away, for I long to be wholly delivered from it, and I do want to be reconciled to God." I am glad to hear you say that, and I will tell you something that ought to move you even more than the thought of your sin, something that ought to make your heart leap within you. Do you ask, "What is that?" Why, it is this,—that, though you have denied Christ, as Peter did, with many aggravations of your guilt, he still loves you, and he bids you come unto him, for he has blotted out all your transgression. God told Jeremiah to say that, when a wife treacherously departs from her husband, when she commits adultery, and falls into all manner of wickedness, he cannot be expected to receive her back again; yet God says to the soul that has gone astray from him, "I am married unto you, saith the Lord; come back to me, and I will forgive you, however much you have defiled yourself." It was not many days after Peter had denied his Master, that the Master, having died and risen from the dead, sent a special message to him. The angel said to the women, "Go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." And it was not many days after that that Peter stood by the sea shore, and his Master said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And Peter was able to answer, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Christ had always loved him, and he loves you too, poor penitent soul. You have denied him, but he has never denied you. No, backslider; you have been false to Christ, but he has never been false to you. Come back to him who still loves you; the marriage tie is not broken, the covenant of peace is not cancelled, though you have so grossly transgressed.

What a mercy it was for Peter that, within a short time of his great fall, his Master gave him work to do; and that same Peter, who had shamefully denied his Lord, was standing up in Jerusalem, filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching to the multitudes, and bearing the standard of the cross in the very front of the battle, the bravest of the brave! And Peter ended his career by dying for his Master, as Christ foretold that he would, by being crucified head downwards, thinking himself unworthy to die in the same position as his Lord had done, and asking as a favour that, if he must be crucified,

it might be in that fashion; yielding up his whole being, in life and in death, to Christ out of intense loyalty to his Lord who had so freely forgiven him his great transgression. That same Master is here, at this moment, seeking you poor prodigals; and he would have you come to him, and receive this gracious message from his lips, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Behold, I have cast all thy transgressions behind my back, and will remember them against thee no more for ever. Go forth, and serve me, and rejoice in me all thy days. Love me much, for thou hast had much forgiven." God grant that many of you may have grace given unto you to enable you to obey that blessed word, and to the name of Jesus shall be praise for evermore! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK XIV. 27—31; 53, 54; 66—72; AND JOHN XVIII. 15—18; 25—27.

Mark xiv. Verses 27—29. *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*

There was love in that utterance, and so far it was commendable; but there was also much self-trust in it, and there was great presumption, for Peter dared even to contradict his Master to his face; and, at the same time, he contradicted the inspired Scripture, for Jesus had told the disciples that it was written that the sheep should be scattered. Yet Peter boldly denied both what God had written and what Christ had said. Alas! there is nothing of evil which proud self-confidence will not make us do. God save us from such a spirit as that!

30, 31. *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.*

See how positive he was, how reliant upon the strength of his own love. It was well to feel such love, but it was ill to mix with it such self-confidence.

31. *Likewise also said they all.*

Whenever a man, who is called to be a leader, goes astray, others are pretty sure to follow him. It was so on this occasion, for when Peter made his boastful speech, "Likewise also said they all," all the rest of his brethren chimed in, and so shared in his sin, but he was chief in the wrong-doing, for he led them all.

In the 53rd verse, we read what happened after Christ's agony and betrayal in Gethsemane:—

53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

Meanwhile, Christ was being put to the utmost derision and contempt. In the 66th verse, we are told more concerning the boastful apostle:—

66—70. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked*

upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

He could not hold his tongue, you see. He was always fast and forward in speech; and no sooner did he begin to speak than the people said, "That is the Galilæan brogue; you come from that part of the country, your speech betrays you."

71, 72. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

John xviii. Verse 15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple:*

That is John, of course; he never mentions his own name if he can help it.

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

I always fancy that John had a greater tenderness for Peter because he was the means of getting him into the palace of the high priest. Peter could not have got in if he had been alone, but John was known to the high priest, and so secured his admission. He must always have felt sorry that he took Peter into a place where he was so strongly tried. Hence John sought him out after his great fall; when perhaps the other apostles were inclined to leave him by himself, John cheered him up, and brought him back to the faith.

17, 18. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*

That was a very dangerous place for Peter to be in; he would have been safer out in the cold.

25. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.*

Twice over, we are told that, while his Master was being buffeted, Peter stood in the midst of the ribald throng, and warmed himself.

25—27. *They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.*

Thus was Christ's prediction literally fulfilled, and thus, by what seems the humble instrumentality of a cock crowing, was Peter brought to repentance. There is many an eloquent divine who has missed the mark when he has been preaching, but God has spoken by a very humble voice. You, dear friend, though you have no gifts of speech, may go and tell the story of Jesus Christ to someone, and God may bring him to repentance through you, as he brought Peter back to himself through the agency of this bird.

May God make us all useful, and keep us from falling into transgression as Peter did! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GREAT MIRACLE-WORKER.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 21ST, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 21st, 1880.

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."—John xi. 47.

I WILL make a preface out of the verse preceding our text: "Some of them"—that is, some of those who saw Lazarus raised from the dead, "went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

Mr. Whitefield once raised a great storm against himself by saying that man, by nature, was little better than half beast and half devil. That was, certainly, a very strong expression; yet I question whether there are not abundant instances of conduct, on the part of men, which would be a disgrace even to beasts, and which would seem more in harmony with the character of the devil; and, in such cases, it would not be inappropriate if we were to say that man is altogether devil. Certainly, in his natural condition, he is altogether under the power of the prince of the air; and, being led captive by Satan, he is oftentimes made to do the very worst of deeds. I am led to make this observation because the two verses, which I have just read to you, reveal some of the meanest conduct that has ever been recorded in human history.

Here we have, first, a band of common informers,—men who stood by the grave of Lazarus, and heard that he had been dead four days, and who listened to the objection of the prudent Martha to the taking away of the stone, because, said she, "by this time he stinketh." These men had seen Lazarus come forth from the tomb at the call of Jesus; they had observed how the onlookers, at Christ's command, unwound the napkin and the graveclothes; and they had not the shadow of a doubt that a notable miracle had been wrought, and that a dead man had been raised to life. One would have thought that the very last thing anybody would have done would be to steal away from such a sight as that, and go and tell the enemies

of the great Miracle-worker in such a way as to excite them to yet greater enmity against him. Many of the spectators, on that memorable occasion, were so convinced by what they saw that they became Christ's disciples, and very properly so; but these other people were only excited to malice and ill-will, and in a mean manner marched off to accuse Jesus to the Pharisees.

Perhaps you say, "Oh! but that happened only once in human history." Possibly not; but our Saviour has never done anything among men but that which is good and kind; his whole life was one of self-denying goodness, and his gospel is a message of mercy, and love, and peace, and truth; and yet there are still many, who insinuate all manner of evil against him, and find fault with his followers,—no difficult task, alas!—not so much out of enmity to the offenders, as enmity to the cause of Christ. O human nature, thou art indeed an evil thing when thou canst act thus meanly!

Nor is this all, for the Pharisees, who were informed of the miracle which had been wrought by Christ, present to us another picture of man at his very worst. Here is positively a parliament of hypocrites! They come together as the great Sanhedrim, or supreme council of the nation,—the chief priests in their robes, and the Pharisees with their phylacteries,—the holiest men in all Judæa; ask them, and they will assure you that it is so;— yet they have met together to oppose a perfectly innocent man, to say the very least about him, who has proved, by working a miracle, that he is a great deal more than a man. When they meet together, they say, "This man doeth many miracles;" yet they are sitting there, plotting and planning to put him down. Surely this assembly looks like another form of Pandemonium; and as Milton gives us pictures of all the winged spirits in hell coming close together into the council with Satan in the midst, I think I see the same thing carried out in Jerusalem. There is the high priest, Caiaphas, in the midst of them; and the Pharisees gather together around him, taking counsel to see if they cannot destroy the Christ.

So, first, there was a band of common informers, and, then, a parliament of hypocrites. Next, look at the arguments they use as the reason why Christ is to be put down. Of course, it is pretended that their desire for his overthrow is the result of their zeal for the public good. It is often the case still that, when a man opposes true religion, he says that he is prompted to do it by zeal for morality, or a burning desire for the good of his country or his race. So it was with these hypocrites in Jerusalem. In effect, they said, "If this man goes on working miracles, and we do not stop him, the people will become his disciples; then the Romans will believe that a new king is being set up over us, and they will pounce upon our nation, and destroy it; and, therefore, we must put him down before they do so." Now, this was a transparent lie; for, first, supposing that Christ had converted all the people of Judæa, had he ever in his life said a word about making himself a king? Did not these Pharisees know that, when the people wanted to make him a king, Jesus had withdrawn himself from them, in order that nothing like a political tinge might be given to his

sacred mission? Did they not also know that the Romans never interfered with religious movements among the nations that they subdued? They were the most tolerant of all conquerors. What mattered it to the Romans what the Jews believed, or did not believe? They left them entirely to themselves religiously; so that, if Christ had induced all the people of the land to become his followers, the Romans would not have interfered in the least degree. But this is, to me, the most transparent part of the falsehood. If this man worked miracles, then the people ought to believe in him, and they ought to become his disciples, and they ought not to be afraid of the Romans. The Romans might be strong, but the man who could work miracles must be stronger; and if it should ever come to a conflict between Roman legions and the Divine Miracle-worker, there can be no question about which would be victorious. So, you see, this argument of the Pharisees, as to why Christ should be put down, was a self-evident fraud.

Perhaps someone asks, "Do men, at the present time, ever talk like this about the Saviour?" I answer,—Yes; the majority of the objections to Christianity, which lull men's consciences to sleep, are nothing better than transparent frauds. If they would honestly examine the evidence laid before them, if they would give their minds to searching out the truth, they would soon be brought to believe on Jesus. Do you not remember how two gentlemen, both of whom were sceptics, said to one another, "Let us, as candid men, investigate some part of the Bible, and see whether it holds together, and bears the mark of inspiration." One of them took the subject of Christ's resurrection, and the other selected the conversion of the apostle Paul. They both sat down to study the Scripture narratives, not believing them to be true; and the result of their investigation was that they were both converted, and the one has given us a book upon the life of Paul, and the other has given us a book upon our Lord's resurrection. Their own examinations of the Word, candidly made, led them to the Saviour's feet. And I believe a similar result would follow, in the case of any sceptics here present, who would take the same course; at any rate, I challenge them to make the trial, and I am not asking of them more than candour requires of every honest man.

There are some people who raise questions even concerning God himself. According to their notions, God should be this, or that, and almost anything but what he really is. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the only living and true God, is not at all according to their taste. Some even venture so far as to call his justness "severity." They would have "a God all mercy" if they could. Or they pick out some one or other of God's attributes, and they want to have a change made in it. What! man, is God to be made to suit thee, instead of thou thyself being adapted to God's will? And is the question to be, not, "How can I be right with my Maker?" but, "How can I make my Maker right with myself?" Is that the blasphemous turn that your thoughts have taken? It is so with some people; and, accordingly, they practically become

idolaters; for, while they pretend to worship the one living and true God, yet, inasmuch as they attribute to him a character which is not his own, they do, in effect, worship a god of their own making.

There are others whose quarrel is with God's Word, this blessed Book, the Bible. There are certain things in it which they do not approve; and when a man once begins to rail at Scripture, you never know what he will say. It is impossible to tell on which side he will find what he calls a fault; and, probably, that which is the highest excellence of the Word will most offend him. We shall, therefore, put this question to him,—Would you have a Bible made according to your mind,—a brand-new Bible, I suppose, once a week, for your mind changes so often that it would need constantly to be revised in order to be according to your mind? And shall God speak only such things as you would have him say? Are you to be master of his voice, and lord even of the Inspired Word? That must not be; it is not for us to say what the Bible ought to be, but to find out what the Bible really is, and then meekly to bow before it, and accept it as the revelation of the Most High.

Many persons dispute with God concerning his providence, both on the larger and on the smaller scale. They think that they could govern nations very much better than God can; and when they read history, some of them cannot see God's hand there at all; and others, who do perceive his hand, yet dare to arraign their Maker for his management of the world. As to their own share in the dispensations of providence, many are utterly discontented. They are not so much in the sunlight as they would like to be, and the rivers that ripple o'er golden sands do not pass through their inheritance. They are often poor and obscure, and therefore they quarrel with the arrangements of God's providence. To anyone of that sort, whom I may be addressing, I would say, "Should it be that the Maker of heaven and earth should do thy bidding?" Surely, this is only another form of the opposition of these chief priests and Pharisees to the Christ of God.

I have to mention one more point that arises from the context; and that is, that the arguments of this parliament of hypocrites led them to a conclusion of blood: "This man is a worker of miracles, therefore he must die." You know the word regicide, which describes the killing of a king, a crime that is rightly thought to be a very terrible one. You know what fratricide means, killing a brother; parricide, killing a father; matricide, killing a mother; but what will you say of a deicide, a God-killer, one who seeks to destroy God if it be possible? There was God in human flesh, moving amongst men, displaying his divine power in working miracles; yet these wicked men said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." Human sin reached its highest point when, at last, it took the innocent, loving Saviour, and hung him up upon a gibbet to die like a common felon. Yet such is the nature of man that he will do anything he can against his God; the case is proven against the capacity of human nature, at any rate, by the passage which we have been considering.

Now I want specially to turn your attention to the latter part of the text: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

I. In considering these words, I ask you to notice, first, THE STUBBORNNESS OF UNBELIEF.

The natural conclusion from the statement, "This man doeth many miracles," should have been,—"Then, he is the Christ of God; so, let us believe in him; let us yield ourselves up wholly to him." But these chief priests and Pharisees did not come to the natural conclusion; so stubborn was their unbelief, that they said, "This man doeth many miracles, therefore we will put him to death if we can."

So that, first, *they admitted the miracles, yet denied the Miracle-worker.* We have many rising up, nowadays, who do not even admit the miracles; they are consistent if they also deny him who wrought the miracles. But if you own the miracles, how can you deny the Miracle-worker? I may be addressing some, who did not know how much that statement concerned themselves. You do believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth wrought many miracles; why, then, do you not believe on him? You are convinced that he did all these things that are recorded concerning him in his Word; why, then, do you not trust him,—trust him to save you, and so to work a miracle of mercy in you? You know that he raised to life those who had been dead; then, why do you not ask him to raise you up from spiritual death, and to give you everlasting life? You believe that he opened the eyes of the blind; then, why do you not ask him to open your eyes? If this man doeth such miracles as these, why do you not come to him, and touch the hem of his garment, that virtue may go out of him to you, as it did to the woman who had the issue of blood?

"Oh!" says one, "I believe all that I find recorded in the Scriptures; I am no sceptic." I am glad to hear you say so; but, if you really do believe it, why do you not act upon it? If you are sick, and you know that this medicine will heal you, why do you not take it when it is freely given to you? If there be salvation in Christ, why are you not saved? If there be pardon for sin, why have you not obtained it, especially as it is to be had for nothing, as the free gift of the grace of God to everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ?

It was, indeed, stubborn unbelief which made the chief priests and Pharisees accept the truth of the miracles, and yet deny the great Miracle-worker.

Further, *they admitted the miracles, yet opposed the Miracle-worker.* Well, now, a man is a fool who acts like that. If a person can work miracles, I certainly will not oppose him, for I cannot tell how far his power may extend; if he can kill, and make alive, I am not going to strive against him. If I fight against anyone, give me an adversary who has only natural power, and not supernatural. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" To contend with omnipotence is as foolish as for wax to fight with flame, or tow with fire. Possibly, I am addressing some who admit that Christ works miracles, and yet who refuse to accept his gospel.

You, dear friends, are living in a state of heart which practically does despite to his precious blood; and I ask you, whoever you are, to consider how fruitless your opposition must be, and no longer to be so stubborn in your unbelief as to confess that Christ is able to save, and able to destroy, and able to do all things, and yet, all the while, you will not yield yourself to him, and even scoff at religion, and use harsh and cruel words towards those dear ones in your own family who are true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not, I implore you, continue to be so inconsistent as to believe the miracles, and yet to oppose the Miracle-worker.

Yet once more, these chief priests and Pharisees manifested a very stubborn unbelief in another way, for *they admitted the miracles, and yet they were afraid of the Miracle-worker's influence over the people.* We also have some objectors, in the present day, who believe Jesus Christ to be a great Teacher, but they are constantly telling us that, to preach up salvation by grace, justification by faith in Jesus, is to endanger morality. Ah, me! I marvel not that the darkness thinks the light is dangerous; yet this complaint is most absurd. If Jesus Christ works miracles, then he is of God; and if he is of God, then the more his influence is extended among the people, the better. Suppose that the preaching of the gospel does stir up opposition in some minds; yet the supremacy of truth is such that opposition to it need never be feared, for truth will lay her iron hand on all her adversaries, and break them in pieces if they will not submit to her righteous rule.

Perhaps some of you imagine that, if you could see a miracle wrought, you would believe in the Miracle-worker; but there is no certainty that you would do anything of the kind. These Pharisees had, doubtless, seen many of Christ's miracles, or received reports of them from those who knew they were true. They admitted that Christ had wrought many miracles, yet they did not believe on him. As a rule, signs and wonders are not sufficient to make men believe. Such things may, indeed, increase their responsibility, but not affect their conscience and their heart. Why do any of you want to see miracles wrought by Christ? You have his Word, you have the Spirit of God among you, and if you reject these, neither would you believe though one rose from the dead. Though the earth should shake, and the heavens should pass away like a scroll, though the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, yet would you not believe if you will not accept the Christ of God as he is revealed in Holy Scripture. Such is the stubbornness of unbelief.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, let us notice THE FUTILITY OF ALL OPPOSITION TO CHRIST, for the chief priests and the Pharisees said, as if they realized their own impotence, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

The whole history of Christ's Church in the world is summed up in the words of our text. After the persecutions to which the early Christians were subjected among the Jews, the Romans tried to destroy Christianity by hunting Christians to the death. Nero smeared them with tar, and set them up in his palace gardens to

burn at night to afford light for his sports. There was no kind of inhuman cruelty that was not practised upon the followers of Jesus, yet within about three hundred years after the death of Christ upon the cross, Christianity was the ruling religion of the then known world. The more the persecutors tried to crush it, the more it continued to advance; the more they fought against it, the more it conquered. Christians had patience and grace enough to endure all manner of trials, and courage enough to continue to bear testimony to the gospel they believed, till at last the truth overthrew the gods of the heathens, and the temples of the idols became, in many instances, the places where Christians met to worship the one living and true God. Well might the adversaries of Christ then have said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

Then there came a long time, when the light of the gospel grew fainter, and waned under the influence of riches and wealth. The devil probably thought that he should have everything all his own way then; but up there among the mountains of Northern Italy, and in the valleys of Piedmont, and away there towards Lyons, and in divers spots there were godly men and women who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and even when the followers of antichrist thought themselves supreme, they might still have said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles; and here, among poor ignorant men and women is the power of the gospel still kept alive." The enemies of the faith sought to crush out all who loved it, but God continually sent fresh witnesses to bear testimony to the truth. Two of these mighty men were Jerome of Prague, and John Huss, who preached the gospel in Bohemia, and then sealed his testimony with his blood. The name Huss means goose, so as he was being burned, he said to his persecutors, "You may roast this goose, but there will come a swan that you will not be able to burn." That prophecy was fulfilled in Martin Luther; and, by-and-by, there sprang up many others who held the truth; and, in various places, no sooner was the gospel proclaimed than multitudes responded to its call as though they had lain concealed, and were only awaiting the summons to arise. It was as when some chieftain has hidden away his men, and then, when he blows his whistle, from every rock there rises up a soldier. Once more was that ancient Scripture true, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." Calvin, Zwingle, Knox, and thousands of others stood up in different lands, until the devil and the pope had to say, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

And since then, whenever there has come a sad, dark time, and the enemy has begun to exult over the faithful, then the light of the gospel has suddenly broken out again, as it did in the days of Whitefield and Wesley, when the whole land seemed steeped in midnight darkness. Then up rose these earnest men, and thousands were brought to the Saviour by their preaching, and the Church had a new reformation. So will it be right on to the end of the age, God will go on converting men by the power of the truth as

applied by his Holy Spirit. Some of them will be such remarkably singular men that their conversion will indeed be a miracle of mercy. Foolish people talk about the last of the Evangelicals, and the last of the Puritans; but that is all nonsense. So long as the earth endureth, and sun and moon shall shine, the everlasting gospel shall not lack a man to proclaim it; and if all the ministers who now live should desert the gospel, and all universities should pour out heretics instead of true preachers of the Word, the Lord will raise him up ministers out of the darkest slums of London, or will find them among the very poorest of the poor, or even among the heathen; but, somehow or other, his gospel must be continually spread abroad. What do ye, O ye haters of the Christ of God? What do ye accomplish after all your opposition to him? Remember that ancient verse of the psalmist: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." For, still, "this man doeth many miracles;" and he will continue to do them till he himself shall come to claim his final victory. Wherefore, be of good comfort, all ye who tremble because of the evil times in which you live, and believe that God will overcome all the powers of darkness in his own good time.

III. Now, the last and the longest part of my discourse is concerning THE CONCLUSION OF TRUE REASON FROM THE TEXT: "This man doeth many miracles." What then? Why, let us believe on him.

I want every one of you to give me your most earnest attention; I do not want you to hear for your neighbour, but for yourself. Let each one of us say for himself or herself, "If this man doeth many miracles, I will see what sort of miracles he does, in order that, if possible, I may have such a miracle wrought upon me." We must always remember that most of the miracles of Christ are symbols and emblems of the spiritual and moral miracles that he works in the world of the heart.

In the Gospel according to John, several miracles are recorded which are not mentioned by any other evangelist; I want to refer to some of them, and also to others recorded by John, in order that we may learn the spiritual lessons that they teach. The first miracle which Christ wrought was the turning of water into wine at the marriage at Cana of Galilee. This is recorded in the second chapter of John's Gospel. Christ did but speak the word, and "the conscious water saw its God and blushed" itself to wine. Is there any instruction for me in that miracle? Suppose that I am a Christian, that I have been rendered pure and clean, so that I am like water that might be served up at a feast. What then? I should like to be much better than I am now, if that is possible. I should like to have much more influence over my fellow-men, far more power to affect them for their present and eternal welfare. I should like to be more fit for use in Christ's blessed festival of mercy; can I be? Yes; "for this man doeth many miracles." He can make that which is good to be much better. He can take the gracious, and lift them up to a still higher plane of spiritual life. He can make the best Christian to be as much better than he now is as the wine that Christ made was better than the water of which he made

it. Come, thou devout spirit, thou who lovest Christ, thou who knowest his power to save, and put thyself into his hand, that he may make something more of thee than thou hast ever yet imagined. I earnestly desire to experience this miracle in my own soul just now; and cannot some young man here from this time forth live a nobler life than he has ever yet lived? God has, by his grace, made him pure and clear; now may he make him strong and full of holy savour, that he may bless his race as long as he lives! "It will be a great miracle," says one, "if he does that to me." That is true; but, then, "this man doeth many miracles." Brother, sister, he can do as much for thee as he did for the water when he turned it into wine.

Now read on in that second chapter, and you will find that it contains the record of another miracle; that is to say, the driving out of all the buyers and sellers who were in the temple at Jerusalem. This is not usually called a miracle, but I think it should be reckoned as one that Christ, with a scourge of small cords, should be able to drive out the many men who were sitting there, selling doves and changing shekels; for, if they had banded themselves together, they might easily have overcome one person armed only with a little scourge; but the Lord Jesus, by the majesty of his person, completely overawed them all. He overturned the tables of the money-changers, and said to those that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

Is there anything in this miracle that can comfort anybody here? Dear friend, you who are consecrated to God, you who are God's temple, and who rejoice to know that it is so, you desire that your whole being should be the house of God, and used only for his glory; but, somehow or other, evil thoughts have entered into your mind, and you cannot get them out. Constitutional temptations, old habits, your daily surroundings,—all these are like the money-changers in the temple; or like those that seem, not only to sell doves, but to sell dragons and owls. Well, now, you wish you could get rid of these unwelcome invaders. Do you not see what comfort there is for you in our text? "This man doeth many miracles;" then, ask him to come and drive out these evil thoughts, these atheistic doubts, these critical sophistries which lead you almost into infidelity, for he can cast them all out. "Oh!" say you, "I have struggled against them for years, and I cannot get rid of them; if they were once all banished from me, it would indeed be a miracle." Well, "this man doeth many miracles," and he can give you such calm and peace of mind, and such certainty of holy faith, that your nature shall become like a purged temple wherein is heard nothing but the song of holy praise, and the voice of them that say, from morning until evening, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Oh, what a miracle that would be! And as "this man doeth many miracles," why should he not do this for you?

Now, if you will turn to the fourth chapter of this Gospel, at the 47th verse, you can read about the next wonder which Christ wrought, and which John has recorded. That was the raising up

to health of the nobleman's child who was at the point of death. Jesus said to him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth;" and he found that it was even so. Have any of you children at home unconverted? Are they the subject of your prayerful solicitude? Are you afraid, from what you see of them, that they will not turn out well? Mother, do they distress you? Father, do they cause you sleepless nights and much anxiety? Well, now, do you not see in this miracle much that may comfort you? Apply to Jesus as that nobleman did; tell him about your child, and his soul-sickness; for the Lord Jesus can heal him of his ill temper, and evil disposition, and all that now causes you such sorrow, and you shall yet hear him say to you, "Thy son liveth;" and you shall have most joy in the very child who caused you most grief. Those characteristics which now seem to be most likely to lead to vicious practices shall, by divine grace, be turned into a strength of character which shall enable your son to glorify God even more than others who have not those propensities. I think we ought to have great comfort concerning our children whenever we read of our Lord Jesus Christ healing those who were at the point of death, and raising up those who were already dead. After all that he has done, what is there that Christ cannot do either for ourselves or for our dear ones? If he has done for you all that you need, then ask him to do for your household all that he has done for you; and from this miracle of the healing of the sick child take comfort to bring every hard case before him.

Now turn to the fifth chapter, and read the record of the miracle wrought by Christ at the pool of Bethesda. There lay a man, who had been decrepit for thirty-eight years; and not until Christ came on that Sabbath day, and bade him take up his bed, and walk, was he cured of his malady. I wonder whether anybody here can get comfort out of this miracle. This poor man was alive, but he was very ill. There had been a time in his life when he was well, but it was such a long while ago that he must almost have forgotten it. Thirty-eight years is a long period of sickness, and the man must almost have despaired of ever being restored. Am I addressing somebody who was once a professor of religion, a member of a Christian church? Are you sighing—

> "What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
> How sweet their memory still"?

It is a long time since you had any such enjoyment as that; yet there is still some life in you, and that makes you look back upon the past with some pleasure, wishing that you could have those happy times over again, and once more know yourself to be God's child. Well, that man's thirty-eight years' sickness, out of which he was restored by Christ, should seem to say to you, "Backslider, though you may have fallen very low, and wandered very far, yet 'this man doeth many miracles,' and he can bring you back again to all your former joy." The devil may have concluded that you belong to him. "Ah!" says he, "I shall never trouble about him." He does not tempt you much now, for he looks upon you as one

who is perfectly safe. He thinks that you will never run away from him; but suppose he should be undeceived this very hour? What if this God-man, that doeth many miracles, should come and call you by his grace, and you should leave the sin into which you have fallen, and in which you seem as though you had been imbedded, as though you had stuck fast in a bed of cement, and should so call you that you will be able to come forth, and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father"? Why should it not be so with you? Have faith in him, who doeth great marvels, and trust him to work a miracle of mercy even for you.

I have not time to do more than just remind you, in passing, that in his sixth chapter John tells us of the five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, whom Christ fed with the lad's five barley loaves and two small fishes. What does that miracle teach us? I think it tells all anxious workers that Jesus Christ is equal to every emergency. Think of the four millions of people in this city, and of the very few in it who really are dealing out to them the bread of life. Yet, brethren, never despair; Christ can feed five million souls as easily as he can feed five; and though the stock to begin with be only a few barley loaves, and a still smaller quantity of little fishes, yet he can keep on multiplying them until the whole multitude shall be satisfied. The agencies at work are sufficient for the purpose in view, if Christ does but bless them; so have unbounded faith in him, for "this man doeth many miracles."

In that sixth chapter, there is also the story of Christ's walking on the sea, to come to his troubled disciples. "The sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew," but in the night watch Jesus came, "and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." What says that miracle to us? Is not this the lesson to be learned from it? Christ's Church is always safe; she may be "tossed with tempest, and not comforted;" but in the darkest night Christ will come, walking over the waves of her trouble, and he will hush her tumult, and give her perfect peace, for "this man doeth many miracles." Everything is safe in his hand, so let us not be afraid, whatever may happen.

Then, if you turn to the ninth chapter, you can read about the miracle—which John alone records—of the man born blind. He had never seen the light, yet Christ made his eyes to open, to the astonishment of all beholders. Is there not someone who can get comfort out of this miracle? Are you, dear friends, desirous to see the true light, and to find Christ as your Saviour? I have met with many persons, who have been for years attending a place of worship, anxious to find salvation. Very often, their failure has been explained by what they have said to me, "Where I have been in the habit of worshipping, sir, there was about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes of something that I never understood. I did not know anything about the way of salvation, and could not make head or tail of what the minister said; but it seemed to be the proper thing to go to a place of worship, so I continued to go there. But, at last, I went to another house of prayer, where I heard the simple story of the cross, and my eyes

were opened to see my Saviour, and now I am rejoicing in him." Ah, dear friend! this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, still doeth many miracles; and if you have been for years wanting to know what you must do to be saved, and are not saved yet, ask Jesus Christ to save you now, and trust him to do it, and the film shall depart from your eyes as you see that Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Redeemer, has undertaken to save all those that put their trust in him.

The last miracle that I can mention now is the one with which our text is concerned, that is, the raising of Lazarus. Here was a man, who was not blind, or sick, or hungry, but dead,—*dead*,—DEAD; yet that made no difference to the great Miracle-worker. "This man doeth many miracles;" and here is the crowning one of all, he can actually raise the dead to life. Is your verdict concerning yourself that you are spiritually dead? *Dead?* DEAD? Do I seem to make those words sound to you like a knell? "Dead! *dead!* DEAD!" And, my Christian friend, have you been earnestly talking to someone, trying to persuade him to trust in Christ, and after all that you have said, have you had to turn aside, and cry, "Alas! he is dead! *Dead!* DEAD"? Then, what is the good of your talking to him? What is the use of my preaching to him? Can the dead arise through anything we can do? No; but this is our comfort and our blessed hope; there is One who is the resurrection and the life; and if he will but bless the message that he gives us to deliver in his name, however feeble we may be as the repeaters of it, he is not feeble, he still doeth great miracles, he can raise the dead, he is still "mighty to save." Ah, yes! if he so wills, he can convert any soul here, however hardened or debased. When I am preaching, I do not think to myself, "I wonder how many souls here will make themselves willing to come to Christ." My thought is, "They shall be willing in the day of his power." When his grace goeth forth, the free will of man is not marred as to its freeness, yet it is sweetly controlled and miraculously subdued, so that he who, but an hour ago, could curse and swear, now begins to pray and to sing; he, who despised Christ, now adores him; he, who was an unbeliever, is now a believer in Christ, and therefore is saved, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." If the gospel had to wait till men came to it, there would be poor results from it; but it is a dew from the Lord that waiteth not for men, neither tarrieth for the sons of men, but it falls when he pleases. Christ waits not till men bare their bosoms to receive his pointed shafts; but he takes his bow, and fits the arrow to the string, and through mailed corslet or steeled cuirass he makes his dart fly omnipotently strong till it pierces the heart, and causes the sinner to fall down slain beneath his matchless might, only to rise to a new life by his glorious grace. O strong Son of God, work some of these miracles in this place just now; and out of heaven may the angels lean over the jewelled battlements, to see what Christ is still doing among the sons of men! For verily, verily, I say unto you, "this man doeth many miracles." Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 28TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, in the summer of 1859.

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."—Acts viii. 37.

IT is not my wont to preach what people commonly call "baptizing sermons." It is very seldom that I even mention the subject of baptism in my preaching, for I find that many of my hearers learn the Scriptural teaching concerning it without much help from me. Of those who have come to unite with us in church-fellowship, a very large proportion consists of persons who have searched out the truth upon this matter for themselves, and could in no wise trace their alteration in sentiment to any remark of mine, but they had seen the ordinance clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. This is a method of arriving at the truth which I greatly prefer to any instruction imparted by myself; for, in the case of people thus divinely taught, I know that their faith will "not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." I refused, on one occasion, to go to Ireland when invited to do so by a brother, who gave, as the reason why he wished me to go, that by going there I should greatly increase the Baptist denomination. "No," I said; "I would not go across the street, much less across the sea, merely to make people Baptists." Wherever I may be, I endeavour, as in the sight of God, so to deal with men as to bring them to Christ, leaving the Spirit of God further to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them unto them.

Yet I dare not be altogether silent concerning believers' baptism. If I would make full proof of my ministry, and preach the whole gospel as it is contained in the New Testament, I must proclaim the truth with regard to that great ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he has himself put in such an important position by coupling it with faith and salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Still, let me assure you, dear friends, that I do not introduce this topic in any controversial spirit, for that I would abhor; but only because I feel it to be "the burden

of the Lord" that presses upon me; and, as it is a part of God's Holy Word, I must preach thereon. In the excellent and estimable Presbyterian Church, before the administration of the Lord's supper, it is usual to have a sermon for the purpose of what is called "fencing the table." That fencing is a great part of the duty of the Christian minister in many other matters beside the communion. All Bible doctrines, all God's promises, and both Christ's ordinances need to be fenced. In the fencing of the Lord's table, the principal topic of the preacher is,—Who are the fit subjects for the reception of the Lord's supper? Who may draw nigh, and partake of the symbolic bread and wine, and who may not approach thereunto?

Now, as the communion table should be fenced, so also should the baptismal pool, so should the promises of God, and so should those great and glorious doctrines which are the essentials of our faith; and I believe that the only fence which is proper and Scriptural is that which is given in our text, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." If a man says to me, "May I reckon myself to be one of the elect?" I reply, "God certainly has an elect people, but thou hast no right to consider thyself as one of them unless thou believest with all thine heart." Then there is the doctrine of effectual calling; and if anyone asks me if he is effectually called, I answer, "If thou believest with all thine heart, then thou certainly hast an interest in this glorious doctrine of God's grace." Then, with regard to the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, which is the basis and foundation of all our hopes, I see no warrant for telling any man that he is redeemed until I can get him to give a full and satisfactory reply to this enquiry, "Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart?" It seems to me that the doctrines of the gospel have no truly comforting message to any man until he believes upon Christ with all his heart.

So also is it with the promises of God. They are rich, dainty, spiritual fare which he has spread upon the table of his banqueting-house; but no one, who does not believe in Christ with all his heart, has any right to lay hold on the "exceeding great and precious promises" which God has recorded for the comfort of his own people. I know that there are some loving and gracious invitations which are addressed to the sinner; and I thank God that it is so; but I also know that the sinner can never realize the sweetness of them until he believes in Jesus. I am sure that he cannot comply with the invitation except by believing with all his heart, and that he must be a stranger to the gracious promises and encouraging invitations until he comes, and puts his trust in "Jesus only."

I am fully persuaded that it is the same with the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's table is not, on any pretence, to be approached by those who do not believe in him with all their heart. "Away, ye profane!" should be the cry of the Christian minister when he is about to dispense the sacred emblems. Believer in Christ, thou art heartily welcome; thou hast a right to come to the table of thy Lord if thou believest in him with all thine heart. Whosoever and whatsoever thou mayest be, the only barrier which we can rightly set before thee bears upon it this inscription,

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Nay, if thou believest, there is no barrier, so come and welcome; we dare not set up before the table of our Lord any barrier which God himself has not put there, so we invite to it all who have believed in Jesus; but we solemnly warn all those who come and partake of this ordinance, without faith in Christ, that they are eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves, not discerning the Lord's body, for none have the right to approach his table but those who, with a true heart, believe in Christ, and in him alone.

It is equally so with regard to the other ordinance of believers' baptism. Whatever opinions different men may hold concerning it, the Word of God *must* stand, and it is our duty to preach all that is there revealed to us. One point that is very plain is that no one has a right to this ordinance until he is a believer in Christ. I am astonished that any Christians should ever have imagined that this rule could be relaxed in any case, and it has often puzzled me that all Calvinists do not see that baptism must belong to the people of God, and to them only. Do we not rightly teach that the doctrines of Scripture are for the comfort and instruction of the believer; that the promises of God are, as a rule, for the believer; that, in fact, the whole plan of God's dispensation of grace is on behalf of the believer, and the believer only? Then I cannot understand upon what ground any solitary exception should be made to the divine rule, and that it should be imagined that this solemn ordinance should be left open to all the world,—not merely to all the intelligent inhabitants of the world, but also be left so open that even an unconscious infant might become the subject of it.

Not only is that a convincing argument with me; but, as I understand it, the whole gospel of Christ is addressed to intelligent individuals. I cannot see anything that I could do to any purpose if I were called upon to preach to an unconscious person. The gospel appeals to men's understanding and heart; but if their whole mental powers are in a dormant condition, I do not see what I, as a preacher, can do in such a case, or what bearing the gospel itself has upon such people. I am amazed that an unconscious babe should be made the partaker of an ordinance which, according to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, requires the conscious acquiescence and complete heart-trust of the recipient. Very few, if any, would argue that infants ought to receive the Lord's supper; but there is no more Scriptural warrant for bringing them to the one ordinance than there is for bringing them to the other.

The Church of England Catechism is quite right when it says that repentance and faith are required of persons to be baptized, but its practice is not in accordance with that Scriptural teaching. The godfather and godmother of the child, when they bring him to the font, promise in his name that he shall repent and believe, and that he shall renounce the devil and all his works; this is more than the child himself could promise to do, and more than I could promise to do; or, if I did say so, I should be a liar to God and to my own soul, since it would be utterly impossible for me to fulfil such a promise. The theory of the Church is that this promise of

repentance and faith is like the paper money that we have in circulation; it is true that it is not the current coin of repentance and faith; nevertheless, it is valid, the promise that the child shall repent and believe is sufficient,—which seems to me to be a strange figment for any rational creature to endorse. I will put the case thus: suppose that there is a king who has absolute dominion over his subjects, and suppose that there is a certain work to be done, say, the insertion of glass in a window which has been broken. Further, imagine that there are two workmen, to both of whom the king gives the command, "Set to work, and mend that window." One of them says, "I will not;" the other says, "I will," yet straightway hangs cobwebs over the broken places. It appears to me that there is not much difference in the disobedience in the two cases; and it is very much the same with those who positively refuse to obey what they know to be the plain commands of God's Word concerning baptism and those who practically disobey those commands by substituting the sprinkling of babies for the immersion of believers, and then bringing in the fiction of sponsorship to support their alteration of the divine ordinance. To my mind, it is a vain attempt to evade compliance with a plain and simple command, and is therefore worse than avowed disobedience would have been. I can understand the position of a man who does not, in his own conscience, feel that this is an ordinance which is limited to the believer; but I cannot comprehend the consistency of one who says that repentance and faith are necessary before baptism, and who then takes the unconscious infant into his arms, sprinkles a few drops of water upon his brow, and then declares that he has become a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven! That seems to me to be not only the height of absurdity, but to be also a heinous sin in the sight of the Most High God.

I repeat what I have already said, that the fencing of both Christ's ordinances can be accomplished by the condition laid down in our text, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." I cannot thrust my brethren and sisters from the Lord's table if they believe in him with all their heart, nor can I keep back from baptism any child who believes in Jesus with all his heart. But, on the other hand, though he be grey-headed and venerable, if he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not my business, as a servant of the Lord, to alter my King's laws so as to please him; but, rather, to say to him, "Stand back until thou art in a fit state to obey my Master's commands. Thou art not yet entitled to share the privileges that belong to God's family. Until thou hast believed in Jesus, and art thus proved to be one of his children, I cannot admit thee as a partaker of either of the ordinances which he has ordained."

Now I am going to practically carry out the teaching of the text by briefly and affectionately addressing our dear friends who are about to be baptized. The observance of this ordinance will awaken, in many of our minds, recollections of similar services in the past. It brings to my remembrance a river in Cambridgeshire, with a great assembly of spectators on the banks, and a youth

walking into the midst of the flowing stream, and there giving himself up, spirit, soul, and body, to the service of his Master. It recalls to me the hour when I thus publicly avowed my allegiance to the King of kings; and I can join with John Newton in saying to my dear Lord and Master,—

> "Many days have pass'd since then,
> Many changes I have seen;
> Yet have been upheld till now;
> Who could hold me up but thou?"

Perhaps others, who have thus "put on Christ," may be cheered, and refreshed, and stirred up by the address I shall now give to those who will presently enter the baptismal pool.

I. In explaining the text, we will take it almost word by word; and, first, dear friends, note THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL FAITH: "If *thou* believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" be baptized.

Have you believed in Christ for yourselves? It is useless for you to say that you are the sons of pious parents, the daughters of godly fathers and mothers; unless you yourselves believe in Jesus, you will be cast down to hell just as surely as will the ungodly descendants of wicked men and women. The faith of your parents may be blessed by God as the means by which you will be brought to Christ; but if you are not brought to him, all the faith of others cannot avail for your salvation. Though you should have Abraham to be your father, and Sarah to be your mother, even then you could not be saved without your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. How apt are we, who occupy the family pew in the house of God, and who from our infancy have been brought up to hear the Word preached, to imagine that there is a kind of family holiness which may avail for us all; and to conceive that, because our parents were Christians, we also are saved! Yet it is not so; there is no such thing as a Christian family, sufficient to include you at the last great day, unless you who belong to it are yourselves Christians; and there is no such thing as a Christian nation unless the individuals, who compose that nation, are all Christians.

Men are ever prone to talk of religion in the mass; but, beloved, remember that you will have to enter heaven one by one if you go there at all. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." No eyes except your own will avail you in looking to the cross, or in weeping over your sin. No other heart's repentance can take the place of your own heart's godly sorrow from sin. No lips but your own can breathe the penitential prayer on your behalf, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You must be brought to feel your own need of a Saviour, you must yourselves be enabled by the Holy Spirit to put your trust in Jesus, or else you will as surely be lost as if you had been born in a Hottentot hut, of parents who neither knew nor loved the Lord.

Personal religion is an essential prerequisite to admission into the Church of Christ, or to either of the ordinances which he has instituted. I shudder when I see men, who are not Christians, taking to themselves the promises that are addressed to believers.

I have heard a man say of a sermon, which was meant for the comfort of the children of God, "Oh, how sweet it was to me!" whereas he was eating stolen sweets to which he had no manner of right. "If *thou* believest with all thine heart," thou mayest suck the honey out of the promises. If thou believest, thou mayest walk to and fro in the spiritual Canaan, from Dan to Beersheba, for it is all thine own. From the hilltops to the valleys' utmost depths, all is thine; yea, from the very centre of heaven to its circumference, or to its furthest limits, all is thine own possession. But if thou believest not, thy pedigree availeth thee nothing; thy godly parentage shall not advantage thee in the last great day; nay, nor even now, for the wrath of God abideth on thee because thou hast not believed on his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent into the world as the one and only Saviour of sinners.

Put your hands to your hearts, then, my dear brothers and sisters, and search and see whether you do really believe for yourselves personally. Suppose the Ethiopian eunuch had said, "I do not myself believe in Jesus, but my father and mother did," Philip would have replied, "Their faith cannot avail for thee; only 'if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest' be baptized." Religion is a personal matter, the ordinances of Christ must be observed by believers only according to their individual standing in him. It is of no use for you to talk of your parents being in the covenant of grace; are *you* in the covenant? Can you say, with David, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure"? "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" For if thou dost not, then we cannot admit thee to fellowship with his people, and we cannot permit thee to be baptized in his name.

II. Note, next, THE GREAT PREREQUISITE FOR BAPTISM: "If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest" be baptized.

So the question each one of you has to answer is this,—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? "Well," says one, "I try to serve the Master as best I can." I am glad to hear it; and if your service is the result of faith in Christ, I bless God for it; but if it is not based on faith, and is not the fruit of faith, it is worthless. All the service of unbelieving men is but whitewashed sin. It may look like virtue; but it is only a base counterfeit, not the genuine coin. Again I put the question to you,—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

"Well," says another, "I accept all the doctrines of grace, beginning with predestination, and ending with final perseverance; I am as orthodox a believer as ever lived." That is not all I want to know from you. Faith in Christ is not the reception of a dry, dead orthodoxy; to believe in Jesus is not simply to be a sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Calvinist; saving faith is not the mere reception of a creed or form of any kind. To believe is to trust, and no man truly believes—in the New Testament meaning of the word,—until he is brought to trust in Christ alone, and takes his whole religion upon trust, relying not on what he sees, nor on what he is, but on what is revealed in God's Word;—not on what he is, or can be, or shall be, nor on what he does or can do, nor on what he feels

or does not feel;—but relying solely on what Christ has done, is doing, and shall yet do. Now, dear brethren and sisters, do you thus believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your hearts? Although you have upon you the attire of candidates for baptism, I entreat you to retire from this pool if you do not believe in Christ. I think I see a tear in your eye, and I hear you say, "Blessed be God that, with many imperfections, I can still look up to Christ, and say,—

> "'Nothing in my hand I bring:
> Simply to thy cross I cling;
> Naked, come to thee for dress:
> Helpless, look to thee for grace;
> Foul, I to the fountain fly;
> Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'"

Well, dear friend, if you can truly make that declaration, however feeble your faith may be, this ordinance is for you, the communion table is for you, the doctrines of the gospel are yours, the promises of Christ are yours, yea, Christ himself is yours; and Christ is all, therefore "all things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

In your baptism, it should be your aim to please God; "but without faith it is impossible to please him." How can that which is not pleasing to him be accounted as the observance of one of his ordinances? But "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" observe it, and thine observance will be acceptable in his sight. If Christ is the unsupported pillar of thy hope, the solitary stay and prop of thy trust, if thy faith really and truly says, "Nothing save Jesus do I rely on for salvation," come hither, come and welcome. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

Some years ago, a man came to me, and said that he wished to be baptized. I put this question to him, "Why do you wish that?" He answered, "Because I want to be a Christian." "But," I enquired, "do you think that baptism will make you a Christian?" "Yes," said he. "Then," I replied, "you are grossly mistaken. We baptize none but those who profess to be already saved through faith in Jesus. Baptism can have no possible effect in helping you on the road to heaven." The man seemed to be utterly staggered at that idea, for he had somehow got into his head the notion that there was something efficacious in the ordinance itself; and when I tried to explain to him that the Scriptures contain no warrant for such a thought as that, and, therefore, that we would not baptize any who did not believe themselves to be already saved, the man went away staggered. Yet I hope that he also went away resolved to ask himself such solemn questions as these, "How is it that I am not a Christian? How is it that I am not a follower of Christ, and that the minister therefore refuses to baptize me, urging me first to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and after that to attend to baptism, but not before?" God forbid that any of you, dear friends, should for a single moment think that

there is any saving virtue in the water in that baptistery! If you were baptized in the River Jordan itself, what could that avail you? Though the waters of baptism flowed down from the Garden of Eden, they could not wash away the stain of sin; nothing but the blood of Jesus can do that. He that has been plunged in that—

> "Fountain fill'd with blood,
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"

may also be plunged into the baptismal pool; when anyone believeth, let him be baptized. But if thou believest not, stand back; this is a sacred circle into which no unbeliever can be permitted to enter. "If thou believest," come hither, and confess thy faith as thy Lord ordained; but if thou believest not, take heed lest thou destroy thine own soul by meddling with that ordinance which is not for thee in thy present condition.

III. Now, thirdly, note THE KIND OF FAITH THAT IS HERE MENTIONED: "If thou believest *with all thine heart.*"

There is a great deal of difference between faith *and* faith. One kind is the faith of the head, and another is the faith of the heart. Some men have all their religion in their head; like poor, miserable, poverty-stricken students, they confine their religion to their head, and there they let it feed upon some dry thought or empty speculation; but the faith of the true Christian occupies the best parlour of the heart. It has its citadel in the innermost part of his being, it dwells at home in his inmost soul.

The devil himself has the faith of the head; he believes, and trembles. He is as orthodox as many very learned divines; as far as the mere statement of theology is concerned, I could trust the devil to draw up a creed. I believe he is thoroughly sound, and that he knows a great deal more about God's Word than most of us do. He can quote it correctly when he pleases, although he is also an adept at misquoting it for his own ends. I do not think that the devil ever was an Arminian, or that he ever will be one; he understands the doctrines of grace, at least in his head, too well for that. In one respect, he is better than some Antinomians, for they believe and presume, while he believes and trembles. Still, Satan and Antinomians never would be very great enemies. I wonder that they talk about the devil tempting them; I believe that they tempt themselves, or that they tempt the devil to tempt them if he really does tempt them at all.

Yet the devil hates much that he believes with his head. There is, for instance, the doctrine of election. "Ah!" says he, "I am not able to deny the truth of that doctrine, yet I hate it, for I know that I am not one of the elect." It is the same with redemption; the devil says, "I loathe that doctrine. I know that Christ has redeemed his people with his blood, but I am not one of them. The cross of Christ is glorious, and I am obliged to admit its power, for I have felt it often, and I am yet to feel it more and more; but I hate the cross, for it crushes me, and takes multitudes of my subjects away from me. I know that Jesus is the Son of God; I wish he was not, and if I could I would tear him from his throne,

and cast him out of his dominions." So, you see, the devil believes with his head much that he hates with his heart.

Faith in Christ is never true unless it is the faith of the heart, unless the heart as well as the head gives assent to it, unless the truth is not only believed, but is also loved. Do you, dear friends, thus believe the truth with your hearts? Are you not only convinced of it, but is it your joy and delight? Do you know that you are a sinner, and do you mourn over that sad fact? Do you know this truth experimentally? Do you also know Christ as your Saviour? Have you received him into your inmost heart as a possession of vital importance to you? Do you appreciate his presence, and rejoice to have him ever with you? Do you know that the blood of Jesus blots out sin? Have you learned that truth, not merely as a Scriptural doctrine, but as a matter of heartfelt experience inasmuch as *your* sins have been thus blotted out? Do you believe, in your heart, that the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier? Do you heartily believe that truth, and therefore do you pray, "Lord, renew and sanctify me by thy gracious Spirit in the inner man"? If not, whatever faith you may think you have does not entitle you to baptism, much less to heaven; therefore, stand back. If thy head alone is full of that which is sound, and right, and true, and thy heart is empty of faith in Christ, and love to God and to his truth, stand back from that baptistery, for thou must not intrude into the place which is reserved for the followers of Christ.

Philip said to the eunuch, "If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest be baptized." I am afraid that some who have been baptized in that pool have not believed with all their heart. They said they did, but I question whether it was true concerning all of them. And, beloved, if we honestly test ourselves, some of us will have grave cause to enquire whether we have any right to the ordinance of believers' baptism. Dost thou, friend, believe on Christ with all thine heart? Christ will have the whole of thine heart or none at all; he will never be content to have part, and to leave the devil to occupy the rest. True believers will give all their heart to Christ, even though they cannot yet get possession of all of it for him. The fact is, it is very much the same with the believer's heart as it was with the Israelites in Canaan; the whole land belonged to them, yet they could not get possession of it all for a while; they had to fight with the Canaanites, and to drive them out. Now, candidates for baptism, can you say from your heart that you give up all to Christ? Can each one of you say to your Lord,—

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne,
> And worship only thee"?

Can you give up all—life, body, soul, health, wealth, or talent,—can you give up all to Christ? If you cannot, you have not believed on him with all your heart; there is some part that you have kept back. If you believe *with* all your heart, your surrender

will be *of* all your heart. "Oh!" says one, "I desire to give all to Christ." Then, my brother, thou hast given all to him; thou hast really done so in effect, and it will be thy privilege practically to carry out thy wish by daily making a full surrender of thyself to him.

Mark just one other aspect of the text. Have you any other confidence besides that which you have in Christ? Is there even a little self-reliance in your heart with regard to salvation, or a little reliance on your own good works or on any ceremonies that you can observe? Then must I say to you, "Stand back from that baptistery until you believe in Christ with all your heart, and can say to him,—

> "'All my trust on thee is stayed,
> All my help from thee I bring.'"

If you can truthfully say that, come and welcome; if not, stand back. Here I can find comfort for myself; for, whatever I cannot say, I can truly say that I believe in Jesus with all my heart; I have nothing else to trust to. Others may rely upon their good works, but I have none to which I can trust. Some may rely upon their prayers, but I have to weep because mine are so few and so feeble. Some may rest on ceremonies, but I have often proved the futility of even the best of them; at the Lord's table itself, I dare not trust to any blessing received through the emblems of my Saviour's broken body and shed blood, my reliance must be upon himself alone. My own strength is perfect weakness; I cannot trust to it, or to anything but Christ. Can you not say the same, dear brothers and sisters? Then may you go down into the water without fear; but if thou believest not with all thine heart, stand back from that baptistery.

In closing my discourse, I would very affectionately put this question to all my hearers, leaving it to the Holy Spirit to apply it to your heart,—Does it not seem, from this passage, that faith is necessary before baptism; and that, if this eunuch had not believed in Jesus, Philip would not have baptized him? "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." If any of you are unbelievers, venture not to think that, in your present state, you can be baptized in the Scriptural fashion; but if you are believers, and have not been baptized, let me put it to your consciences whether you think you are right in neglecting this ordinance of Christ. That is a matter for you seriously to think of; it rests between your Saviour and your own soul; I pray the Lord to guide us all to a right decision. If we are wrong, may he set us right; and if you are wrong, may he set you right! The prayer of a certain scholar was a very wise one, and I commend it to you. In a great dispute in which he was engaged, he was observed to be frequently writing, so someone said to him, "May I look at your notes?" "Certainly," he replied. When the notes were examined, it was found that they simply consisted of the words, "More light, Lord, more light!" I think that is a request which we may present for many of our brethren, and certainly for ourselves, "More light, Lord, more light!"

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ACTS VIII. 4—40.

Verses 4—6. *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

We cannot tell how far the soil had been prepared for the sowing of the gospel seed by our Lord's visit to Sychar, a city of Samaria. The influence of the converts in that place may have inclined the people of the city of Samaria to give the more heed to the preaching of Philip. The work of a great and good man may seem sometimes to die out, but its effects remain, and extend beyond the place where he laboured.

7—11. *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.*

He had managed to secure great influence over the people, and he held them under his wicked rule.

12—17. *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

So that miraculous gifts were bestowed upon them. Of course, there was already manifest among them that divine operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are converted, and brought to faith in Christ; but they had not known the special, attesting, wonder-working power of the Spirit until the apostles came amongst them. A good work was thus done, yet everything was not altogether as the apostles could have wished it to be.

18—26. *And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

He must have wondered at receiving such an order as that. To be directed to go to a city, he could understand; but to be sent to a road which went through the desert, must have seemed strange to him; yet he obeyed his Lord's orders.

27. *And he arose and went:*

Always do as you are told by your Lord. The first qualification for a good servant of Jesus Christ is immediate obedience.

27, 28. *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

He was a devout man, who was seeking rest of heart, but he could not find it. He had joined in all the solemn services of the Jewish faith, but as yet he had not discovered the great secret of eternal life. He was still searching for it; and as he rode along the rough road, he was reading the Book of the prophet Esaias.

29, 30. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

That is the main thing; a religion that is not based upon understanding will soon come to an end. An emotional religion—one that is nothing but emotion—will be temporary and transient religion; so Philip enquired of the eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

31—34. *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

That was a very important question; it went to the very root of the matter. It was useless for him to read about some unknown person; he must know who it was of whom the prophet had written.

35. *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

You may begin anywhere in the Bible, and preach Jesus. You may begin at the first chapter of Genesis, or at the last chapter of Malachi, at the first of Matthew or the last of Revelation, and still preach Jesus, for he is the sum and substance of the whole Scripture.

36—40. *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached—*

See how he kept to his one business wherever he might be, in Samaria, on the desert pathway, or in the town of Azotus: "He preached"—

40. *In all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.*

Oh, for the like earnest spirit to be in all of us who profess to be Christ's followers, that we may preach him wherever we may be!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE REDEEMER'S FACE SET LIKE A FLINT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 4TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 28th, 1880.

"For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."—Isaiah l. 7.

THESE are, in prophecy, the words of the Messiah. This is the language of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Deliverer, whom God hath sent into the world to be the one and only Saviour. We know that this is the case because it is to him, and to him alone, that the verse preceding our text must refer: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." This is the declaration of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews; and it is he who said of old in prophecy, and afterwards carried it out in actual life, "I set my face like a flint." Luke seems to have had this passage in his mind when he wrote the 51st verse of his ninth chapter, in which he says of our Lord that, "when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." There is just the same meaning in the two passages, and one cannot help feeling that the words recorded by Isaiah were brought by the Holy Spirit to the memory of Luke when he penned that expression. The fact is, that our Master, even from eternity resolved to save his people, and nothing could keep him from the accomplishment of his purpose. From eternity he foresaw that they would fall from their first estate, and he entered into covenant engagements to redeem them; and from the pledge he gave of old, he never started back.

Time rolled on, and men fell, and afterwards multiplied upon the face of the earth; but Christ's delights were still with the sons of men, and often did he, in one form or another, visit this earth, to converse with Abraham, or to wrestle with Jacob, or to speak with Joshua, or to walk in the burning fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He was always anticipating the time when he should actually assume human nature, and fulfil his covenant engagements. At last, the appointed hour arrived, and

then he did not disdain the virgin's womb, or the Bethlehem manger, or the workshop of Nazareth, where he became subject to his reputed father. Even as a child, he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The set purpose to redeem his people was an all-consuming passion, that ever burned within his soul; for what he said once to his disciples he felt always, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He felt bound and hampered until he could get to his chief work; he longed to be at it. With ardent desire had he desired to eat that last of passovers on the eve of himself becoming the Lamb of God's passover, for he had set his face like a flint upon the accomplishment of the task he had undertaken, and he had resolved to go through with it even to the end.

I may not be able to say much that is fresh upon this theme, but I hope that I shall be helped by the Spirit to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." My great object is to lead you to love him who so loved you that he set his face like a flint in his determination to save you. O ye redeemed ones, on whose behalf this strong resolve was made,—ye who have been bought by the precious blood of this steadfast, resolute Redeemer, come and think awhile of him, that your hearts may burn within you, and that your faces may be set like flints to live and die for him who lived and died for you!

First, I am going to speak to you upon *his steadfast resolve tested;* secondly, upon *his steadfast resolve sustained;* and, thirdly, upon *his steadfast resolve imitated.*

I. First, our Lord said, "Therefore have I set my face like a flint," and we are to think of HOW HIS STERN RESOLVE WAS TESTED.

Our Lord was tempted to turn aside from this purpose, first, *by the offers of the world.* The populace wanted to take him by force, and make him a king. He was, at times, so popular amongst the multitude that the Pharisees did not dare to seize him, for they feared the people. When he rode through the streets of Jerusalem in triumph, it appeared as if all the inhabitants of the city were, for a while at least, upon his side. They were, it is true, labouring under a great mistake. They supposed that he was about to set up a temporal sovereignty; and if he would do that, and drive away their Roman conquerors, they would gladly follow him; but when they perceived that he had no such designs, but that his kingdom was purely spiritual, and not of this world,—that he cared nothing for honour from men, but only sought to make them holy, then they changed their note, and cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Yet many a man, possessed by a high resolve, has been turned aside from his purpose by the bauble of earthly honour. He might have become great in his Master's esteem, but he chose to receive a worldly title, and to wear a ribbon. He might have been a blessing to his fellow-men; but he was dazzled by the glitter of a coronet, so he left the path of usefulness to pursue the road of earthly fame. There have been hundreds and thousands of cases, in which men's characters appeared to be opening like a rose; but the worm of wealth was gnawing at the root, and ere the rose could

fully expand, and flood the air with its perfume, it had been destroyed.

But Christ, when he was taken by Satan to an exceeding high mountain, and set upon a place where he could see all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time, and had the offer of all these if he would fall down and worship the power of evil, was not to be turned aside from his steadfastness. His zeal was too fervent, his purpose was too strong, his compassion for his people was too intense for him to yield to the tempter. Had he not voluntarily left the thrones and royalties of heaven, and stripped himself of the glorious array which he had worn within his Father's courts, to come down here to be a carpenter's son; so who could bribe him to turn from his purpose? No one, for he had set his face like a flint to put off all thought of seeking earthly honour, and to endure the utmost depths of shame, that he might redeem his people from the wrath to come.

His steadfast purpose was tried, next, *by the persuasions of his friends.* It is very dangerous, when you are possessed by a high purpose, to go and consult with flesh and blood; for if you are worthy of such an honour, there are few who can match with you. Men, who live for God's glory and the well-being of their fellow-men, are like giants on the mountain tops, while others are hidden away in the depths of the valleys, hoarding up their gold, or living only for self. He who would be a God's man, and such a man as Christ was, must not consult with flesh and blood, or ask his dearest friend's advice when once he knows his Lord's will. Christ's kinsmen said that he was beside himself, and they would have laid hold of him, and confined him if they could. They thought his zeal had carried him beyond the bounds of reason; and when he told his disciples about his approaching death upon the cross, "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee;" and all the disciples would fain have persuaded him to choose an easier path than that which led to Calvary, and the grave.

In the present day, there are many men who might have been both good and great if they had not been spoilt by their friends. They listened to what they thought was meant to be uttered in love to them, but which was really a siren song luring them away from their proper course on to the rocks; and thus they lost the opportunity which they might have had of serving God and man. But not so was it with Christ. He recognized the hand of Satan in Peter's temptation, so he said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Thus our Saviour resisted all persuasions; and, with his face set like a flint, went on with his work even until the hour of his death.

A far worse trial, however, to Christ's steadfast resolve was furnished *by the unworthiness of his clients.* "He came unto his own;" and how did they treat him? "His own received him not." He came into the vineyard as God's heir, but what said the husbandmen who had been put in charge of it? "This is the heir;

come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Look even at Christ's twelve apostles when he was about to die. Judas betrayed him, and Peter denied him, but what of the rest of the chosen twelve? "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." Yet these were the men for whom he was going to die, and he might well have asked himself, "Are they worth such a sacrifice?" There were others of mankind, for whom he had come to die, what were they doing? If you had been in Jerusalem at that time, you might have heard them in the streets crying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Even when Pilate was convinced of his innocence, and sought to deliver him from the demented mob, they cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children,"—little dreaming how terribly their imprecation would be fulfilled at the destruction of their beautiful city and its guilty inhabitants. These were the very people for whom Christ shed his precious blood; for, in that crowd, there were thousands who, a few weeks afterwards, heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, and believed in that Christ whom they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain.

If you are about to do a man a kindness, and you find that he is ungrateful and unthankful,—or that he is even worse than that, a traitorous, treacherous villain, you stay your hand, and ask yourself, "Why should I make any sacrifice for him?" The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" but for unrighteous men, for rebels, for those who ill-treat you, who among men would ever think of dying? Yet our Lord Jesus Christ "died for the ungodly." Let me tell you what always appears to me to be the most wonderful thing about Christ's death; it is, that *he died for me.* And if you are a believer in him, you also can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." This is the crowning mercy of his death, that there is in us nothing that could have merited such a sacrifice. On the contrary, there is everything in us which, if Jesus had been like other men, would have forced him to say, "I will not give my life for such creatures as these." Yet he set his face like a flint to carry out his purpose; whatever his clients might do, he still determined to plead their cause, and to support his plea even by the shedding of his own blood.

But all these things were comparatively small trials to the great-hearted and resolute Christ, for he was still more severely tested, as to his steadfast resolve, *by the bitterness which he tasted at his entrance upon his great work as our substitutionary sacrifice.* The first drops of that awful tempest, which fell upon him in the garden of Gethsemane, were hot and terrible. His soul was sorrowful, even unto death, so he resorted to prayer; yet little comfort had he even in that holy exercise, so he rose from his knees, and went to his disciples that he might speak with them as men usually talk to their sympathizing fellows in their direst agony. But he found them asleep, so back he went to his Father, and once again prayed, "If it be possible to achieve the salvation of my people, and yet for me not to drink this cup, let it pass from me." But when he found that it was not possible, and that his thrice-repeated

prayer received no response, he gave himself up to die without a murmuring word, and bade his slumbering disciples arise, for he was at hand who would betray him.

If anything could have broken our Saviour's resolution, it would have been the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane; yet all that could not turn him from his purpose. Did you ever feel such exceeding sorrow, were you ever so terribly depressed in spirit that you wished, a thousand times over, that you had never been born, or that you could die? Have you ever been subject to dire despair? Some of us have felt as though a sword had been thrust into our bones, slaying all the life of our joy. At such a time, resolves that have been wisely made are often unwisely broken. The strongest man can scarcely stand up against depression of spirit. Solomon truly said, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Yet Christ was so resolved to achieve the redemption of his people that, even when reproach had broken his heart, and he was full of heaviness, he still set his face like a flint, and determined that he would accomplish the work that he had undertaken.

I hope I do somewhat stir you up to think with gratitude of my blessed Lord, and of his great love to you, by thus reminding you of his steadfastness of purpose. O ye who love him, help me by giving your best thoughts to sacred meditation upon this wondrous Saviour of ours! This morning,* in speaking upon the words, "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it," I showed you that there was no flint in the heart of Jesus; and I am trying now to show you what flint there was in his face, how steadfastly this tender-hearted man could move in the direction which he had from eternity determined to take in order to procure the salvation of his people.

After our Saviour's trial in Gethsemane, his resolve was further tested *by the ease with which he could have relinquished the enterprise if he had wished to do so.* I have known some people keep to their course of life merely because they could not get out of it. They had a certain purpose in view, to which they had committed themselves in such a manner that they could not withdraw from it. But our blessed Lord had many opportunities when he might have abandoned his purpose. For instance, when before Pilate, he had to deal with a man who might have been conciliated by a single sentence; yet, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Pilate greatly marvelled that Jesus answered him nothing; and if our Lord had spoken to him, and fully explained matters, he might have released him. It is clear that Pilate had no wish to let him be put to death; in fact, he had a thorough distaste to the dastardly deed, and tried all he could to prevent it. If Christ had wished to do so, he might easily enough have turned Pilate against his accusers, and induced him to call for the Roman soldiery to disperse and even to slay the mob in the street; but he did not do so. Even after Christ had been betrayed, there was

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,570, "The Lamentations of Jesus."

not a moment in which he might not, with a wish, have set himself free; and, with a word, have chased away all his adversaries. But, all the while, his face was steadfastly set upon his one great purpose of achieving the redemption of his people; and he resolved that the great deed of love must be done, cost what it might.

If he had not been so resolute as he was, he might have been turned from his purpose *by the taunts of those who scoffed at him.* Wicked men have nailed him to the accursed tree; do you see him bleeding, suffering, dying? He utters an agonizing cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" and the heartless spectators pun upon it. He cries to El, the Strong One, and they mock him by saying, "He calleth for Elias." The chief priests, and scribes, and elders joined in the mockery, and said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." He could have come down if he had pleased, but his steadfast resolve held him to the cross. He might have leaped down into the midst of the ribald throng, like the destroying angel in Egypt, and have swept them all to Gehenna in an instant; yet there he hung in order that he might redeem men from destruction, and all their taunts could not make him move from his purpose. There was one, who hung there dying by his side, who said to him, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us," taunting him even with the guilty, miserable lips of a dying thief; and, often, taunts are all the sharper when they come from mean, debased men; yet Jesus bore it all without flinching. Though all the devils from hell might gibe at him, and men from all parts of the earth might gather to mock, and jeer, and leer at him, yet still his face was set like a flint to accomplish the task which he had undertaken. It must be done, it shall be done; he will certainly die for his people, and nothing can turn him aside from that resolve.

But how shall I tell you of that last trying test to which he was subjected *by the full stress of the death-agony?* After all, the griefs of his body were but the body of his griefs; but the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. And who can adequately describe these? No mortal tongue ever can fully set them forth. Jehovah had permitted him to stand in the room, and place, and stead of guilty men; and finding him there, where the actual sinners should have been, he smote him. It was needful that there should be concentrated into those strokes all the punishment that was due to the vast mass of guilt which was laid upon the great Sin-bearer; and, therefore, Christ bore—I cannot put it better than in Hart's words,—

> "Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
> With strength enough, but none to spare."

That awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was the concentration of the very essence of misery and woe. Then was it that the alabaster box was broken, and the precious ointment was poured forth to perfume the air all the way from earth to heaven, for God himself smells a sweet savour of rest in the sacrifice

of his well-beloved and only-begotten Son. Death could not keep him back from the accomplishment of his purpose to redeem his people. Well did Charles Wesley sing,—

> "Stronger his love than death or hell;
> Its riches are unsearchable:
> The first-born sons of light
> Desire in vain its depths to see;
> They cannot reach the mystery,
> The length, and breadth, and height."

Thus have I shown you how our Lord's steadfast resolve was tested.

II. Now, very briefly, notice HOW HIS STEADFAST RESOLVE WAS SUSTAINED.

Recollect that we are now speaking of Jesus, not as God, but as man; or, if you will, in the united personality in which the two natures find a wondrous and mysterious union in the God-man, Christ Jesus, the Friend of sinful man.

According to our text and its connection, our Lord's steadfastness resulted, first, *from his Divine schooling.* This is described in the fourth verse: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." Christ never played at covenanting with God, nor did he ever play at saving men. He had given himself up for us, even from eternity, as a whole burnt-offering; and when he actually became our Saviour, he carried out his purpose to the full. This passage seems to teach us that, in his earthly life, his Father was ever near him, awakening him, and teaching him, morning by morning. As a Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and as the Holy Spirit rested upon him without measure, his steadfast resolve remained strong and invincible; and, dear friend, if you mean to be resolved to live as a Christian should, you also must be taught of God. You must go to the Word to learn what God the Lord has spoken, or else you will be ignorant and fickle,—sometimes hot and sometimes cold, and changeable as the wind. Christ's resolution was sustained by Divine schooling, and it must be the same with yours also.

Then, next, his steadfastness was sustained *by his conscious innocence.* That is a grand challenge in the eighth verse: "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?" Christ knew, all the while that he was suffering for sin, that he had personally done no wrong. Even when his Father forsook him for a time, because he was occupying the place of the guilty, he knew that he was free from all guilt of his own. There is something wonderfully sustaining in the consciousness of innocence under false accusations. I do not think that Job could have survived his many trials if it had not been for the conviction that he was innocent of the charges that his accusers brought against him; and if God helps you to live a godly life, my dear friend, there is nothing like it to enable

you to persevere under all difficulties. "Conscience," when it is once defiled, "makes cowards of us all;" but if we have a conscience void of offence toward God and men, that is a fountain of courage, and the source of great strength. Well might our Saviour's face be set like a flint when he could say, "He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me."

But, according to our text, the Lord Jesus Christ's resolve was maintained *by his unshaken confidence in the help of God.* Read the whole verse: "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." How greatly the Father strengthened Christ in lonely midnight hours, we cannot tell, for we have no records of the fervent prayers to which the cold mountains could have borne witness. He went wearied to the mountain side,—not to sleep, but to cry to God; and he came back with the drops of dew still clinging to his locks, but he was strong to face the multitude, or to perform any task that might be required of him, for he had been with his Father in the midnight hour, and often the whole night through. It was God's own Spirit that came upon him when he was weary and faint, and strengthened him for further service. His own testimony to his disciples, concerning this secret sustenance, was, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." The Father helped him, and the Spirit helped him; and that is how you also need to be helped. If the "strong Son of God" put himself into such a condition, for our sakes, that he needed such aid as this, how much more must you and I need it, our weakness being so manifest, and our fickleness so evident!

There was one thing more by which Christ's resolve was sustained; that was, *by the joy that was set before him.* You know the passage in which Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." What was that joy but the joy of saving immortal souls,—the joy of vindicating the broken law of God,—the joy of breaking down the power of evil in the world, and setting up a kingdom of goodness and of love,—the joy of bringing to men a remedy for all their diseases, a cure-all for their miseries,—the joy of gathering unto himself a multitude that no man can number, redeemed by blood out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, who should glorify God even the Father for ever and ever? There have been mothers who have borne a thousand sorrows for the sake of their children; there have been brave warriors who have endured wounds and death itself for the sake of their country; but what shall I say of this glorious One, whose joy it was to lift up us who were so low, to cleanse us who were so foul, to find us who were lost, and to save us who, without his saving grace, would all have been cast away for ever? There must have beamed, in the Saviour's eye, a light of supreme benevolence as he said to himself in his last agonies, "I am dying; but I am, by my death, redeeming my people from destruction. I am suffering more than tongue can tell; but, by means of my sufferings, they shall be rescued from

the wrath to come. The pouring out of my blood is scattering seeds of bliss in the furrows of earth that once were cursed by sin, and from them a seed shall arise to serve my Father, and to be unto him a chosen generation, a peculiar people. Multitudes of weary ones shall find rest by coming unto me, and troubled spirits shall be filled with joy as, by faith, they behold me dead, and risen again." This was the joy that sustained our Saviour under all he had to endure.

III. My time is almost gone, so I will only say just a little upon the last part of my theme, which is, CHRIST'S STEADFAST RESOLVE IMITATED.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I speak especially to you. We serve a Master who steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, in order that he might accomplish the one great purpose for which he came to earth, and from which he could not be turned. Therefore, it behoves us to be faithful to him, and to partake as far as we can of his spirit. Does he not seem to accuse us, without saying a word, for his face was set like a flint, while our faces are often made to blush with shame when we are called upon to speak up for him, or perhaps when we are ashamed to do so? O ye fickle Christians, hot in a revival service, and lukewarm afterwards, you who sing,—

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,"—

and yet do nothing of the kind;—O you who say that you love the Lord with all your hearts, and declare that you are willing to die for him, yet go into the world to put him to an open shame by your inconsistencies;—look at your Lord, and then blush to such a crimson hue as no one can take out of your face again! If we truly follow such a Lord as Christ is, we also ought to be flinty-faced for all holy purposes, and I ask you, dear friends, to pray to God the Holy Spirit to make you so.

To attain this end, *if there is anything right in this world, be on the side of it.* No matter what it costs you, no matter whether you lose friends or not, if it is right, stand up for it, for Jesus would have done so. Policy would suggest that you might as well tack just a little;—do not go over to the wrong side, but be a neutral; take the golden mean, which often is both "golden" and "mean" too. Do nothing of the kind, I implore you. Oh, that we might have grace to say, "Gold or no gold, right is right; and we are on that side even if death follows for the right and the true."

Next, *if you have a right purpose that glorifies God, carry it out.* It is difficult to do that, you say; well, then, you must be all the more determined in your resolve to do it. There is nothing in the world so hard but something harder will cut it; so, if your own resolve becomes harder than the difficulty you have to face, the thing goes to be done. It ought to be so with us, for it was so with Christ. Are you resolved, dear friend, that being a Christian you will spread the Redeemer's kingdom? Then break that cowardly silence which has so long held you in captivity; and speak for Christ. How can a dumb tongue glorify him? How can you

expect to win others to him if you never speak about him? If this be a cross to you, resolve that you will take it up, and carry it bravely for Christ. I pray that not one of the members of this church may be barren and unfruitful; is there one of you who has never brought another soul to Christ? I am afraid there are some such members amongst us; yet I am very happy to testify that I have seen many of your faces in the sweetest possible association; by that expression, I mean that I have seen you bring a friend to me, and say, "Here is a soul that I have tried to comfort, that I hope I have really led to Christ, and I have brought him to you that he may confess his Saviour, and unite with the Lord's people in church-fellowship." There used to sit, in the left-hand gallery there, an old man, who had a small annuity, who had his time to himself, and who brought to me, one after the other, I can scarcely tell you how many persons whom he had induced to come into this place, and sit in his seats. He took a whole pew in order that he might bring people into it, and he would walk in Hyde Park, from day to day, till he met with a likely gentleman who would accept the seat ticket, and come here at the next service; and there are many, who are now members of this church, who gratefully remember old Mr. Hobson because they would never have been likely to be here if he had not brought them where they could hear of Christ, and learn to trust him. When our friend died, I greatly missed him, for I scarcely knew another who spent himself as he did. He had no powers of speech, but he bought the printed sermons, and gave them to people, saying that he heard that sermon preached, and as he liked it, would they mind reading it? And when he brought the converts to join the church, I tell you that there never was any mother who showed her firstborn child with such delight as he had when he said to me, "When can you see another, sir? I have caught another, blessed be God!" Oh, that all of you, with little ability or with great talents, would try so to live that, for Christ's sake, you would set your face like a flint in your holy resolve not to go to heaven alone, feeling that you must have others to share its glories with you! You barren Christian, I cannot bear to think of you remaining as you are, never having brought one soul to the Saviour! What will you feel in heaven when you get there? I have no doubt you will be happy, but there will be nobody to come up to you, and say, "Blessed be God that I see you here, for you brought me to Jesus!" Oh, I am sorry for you, brother! You will get up in a corner, all alone, I am afraid;—I will try to come round your way, if I can; but I think that, even in heaven, those who have worked most for Christ will like to get together, and they will like to have around them a cluster of those of whom they can say to God, "Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me."

I must say just this closing word. There are some of you, working-men, who come here, and who begin to fear the Lord; but when you get into the workshop, everybody jeers at you. Now, set your face like a flint, and resolve not to mind it. I pray God that,

in the midst of the chaff and the foul language with which your ears will be assailed, you may be able to stand fast for God, even as Christ Jesus stood fast for you. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH L.

This chapter might well have been written by our Lord Jesus Christ himself at the time when he was upon the earth.

Verse 1. *Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

There were some who said God had put away, like a divorced woman, his ancient people, that he had sold his children into slavery; but he says, "It is not so. Where is the bill of divorcement? To whom have I sold you?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

That is to say, the nation, which was their mother, had lost the favour of God; not because of his capriciousness, but because their sins had cried aloud for justice and for judgment. It could not be that God should be in friendly relationship with such a people, so hypocritical, so false, so every way rebellious against him.

2. *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?*

Christ came to this world at a time when there practically seemed to be none left on the earth who were good for anything. The Pharisees, who were, outwardly, the most religious of men, were proud formalists and base hypocrites, and the whole nation had gone astray from God, so that Christ might well ask, "When I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?"

2. *Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.*

Here the Lord reminds them of what he did at the Red Sea. This same Christ, who came here, and found none to answer to his call, is the true God who was the Redeemer of Israel. He led the tribes through the Red Sea, drying it up by the word of his mouth, that there might be a way for his ransomed to pass through; yet, when this great Redeemer came to earth, so far as the most of men were concerned, there were none to welcome him. Even though he came in love and tenderness, there were none to answer to him.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*

Notice the wonderful contrast between the third verse and the fourth. It is the same "I" who says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness," who becomes a scholar in God's school, and bows his ear to listen to the teachings of the Father. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience." He was so great that he counted it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God, dividing the sea, and covering the heavens with blackness; yet he condescended to take upon himself the form of a servant, and as a servant he received his instructions from the great Lord of all.

5, 6. *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

That same Divine One was, in due time, veiled in human flesh; and, then, he, who covered the heavens with blackness, gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Oh, wondrous condescension of our glorious Lord! I want you again to notice the contrast in this chapter; let me read two verses one after another, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." I think anything I might say would only detract from the marvellous force of contrast which these words reveal between the Godhead and the humanity of Christ.

7, 8. *For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.*

Christ is innocent, and therefore he defies all his accusers. Christ has suffered the penalty of the sin which he bore on our behalf; but he has so completely put it away that, notwithstanding our guilt, he defies all our accusers, and there rings through earth and heaven this bold challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

9. *Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*

The enemies of Christ shall all pass away, they shall be utterly destroyed.

Now comes a blessed lesson for us. As Christ persevered in his great work even to the end, so let us do the same.

10. *Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*

Let not the darkness keep you back, any more than it did your Master. Still go on, and stay yourselves upon your God.

11. *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,—*

Listen to this, ye who live without God, yet think yourselves happy; ye who have no hope of the great hereafter, yet are content with the present: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,"—

11. *That compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.*

"Be happy while you may; have 'a short life and a merry one,' if that is your choice."

11. *This shall ye have of mine hand;*

When your walking is done, see what will be the end of it.—

11. *Ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 942, 291.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"I HAVE ENOUGH."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 11TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, December 9th, 1880.

"Esau said, I have enough . . . . Jacob said, I have enough."—Genesis xxxiii. 9, 11.

IT is a very rare thing to meet with people who say that they have enough, for those who have most generally desire more, and those who have little feel that contentment is a thing which cannot reasonably be expected from them. For any person honestly and truthfully to say, "I have enough," is so unusual a circumstance that I do not remember having heard it often. I have done so a few times, at long intervals. This being the case as a rule, it is very remarkable that there should be, in this chapter, a record of two persons, who each said, "I have enough." It is specially noteworthy that this was said by two brothers; for, generally, if one of two brothers is contented, the other is of quite a different disposition. One may be of a very happy and easy-going spirit, but the other possesses enough worry and care to have stocked the two. But here are two brothers, twins, yet each one says, "I have enough."

It will appear to you as a still more singular fact if you recollect that these brothers differed so greatly from one another in other respects. The one was described by the apostle Paul as a "profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright;" yet he says, "I have enough." The other was a man who had wrestled with God, and who had power with God and with men as a prince; he also says, "I have enough." It seems to me as if, on that occasion, the blessing of their father Isaac rested upon them both; for you remember that, although Esau did not receive the great blessing,—the covenant blessing,—that having gone to Jacob who secured it by deception, yet Esau did receive a great blessing of a temporal kind, which Isaac pronounced upon him with all the fervour of a father who loved his son most ardently. Esau thus received what he most wanted, for he cared very little for the spiritual blessing,—not being a spiritual man,—and when he obtained the temporal blessing, that satisfied his heart, and he said,

"It is enough." The blessing of a gracious father is a blessing indeed; and though it may not always come, as we could wish, in the spiritual fashion, for all sons are not Jacobs, yet, nevertheless, it does come in some fashion or other; and, thus, upon Esau there fell the blessing which his father Isaac pronounced upon him when he said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above."

I am going to try to show you that, although these two different people did each say, "I have enough," and although the meaning of their words was in some sense alike, yet there were great differences as to the innermost meaning of the very same words when they came out of different mouths.

I. My first observation is, that HERE IS AN UNGODLY MAN WHO SAYS THAT HE HAS ENOUGH.

There are some unconverted men who are content with their present possessions; *it is not always or often the case*, but it is so sometimes. Contentment is not altogether a spiritual gift; it is possessed by some men who make no pretence to spiritual attainments. You must admit that it is so; and it is always unfair and unjust, because it is false, to say that merely moral men have no moral virtues, for they sometimes have excellences which, for what they are, shine very brightly, and put to shame the defects of professing Christians. A Bristol stone is not a diamond, and it is not worth anything like the price of a diamond; but if you were to say that it was not like a diamond, and that it did not shine, you would do it a gross injustice. Paste gems are not real jewels; but they are made so remarkably like the genuine article that, if you were to say that they have no brilliancy, you would be denying that which is a matter of fact. And, in like manner, there are unconverted men whose natural excellences are bright and shining, and ought not to be denied; and, though they are not the people of God, and in the day when God shall make up his jewels they will not be numbered with them, for they are mere counterfeits and imitations, yet there is much to be seen in them which we should admire, and of which we ought to confess the excellence. There are some men, who have not the grace of God in their hearts, who, nevertheless, are not always fretting and worrying, as certain other people are. It is a comfort for their families that they are contented; and it is well that even an Esau should say, "I have enough." It is good for Jacob that Esau should say it, and it is good for Esau himself. It is well for a man's wife and his family that he should be of a happy temperament, and of a contented spirit, instead of being, as some are, perpetually grasping, and grinding, and scraping, and doing everything they can to get more to add to what they already possess. Well, then, if even unconverted men sometimes say, "We have enough,"—and we do occasionally meet with such persons,—what a shame it will be if those, who have the grace of God within them, should fall short of even that contentment which worldly men have attained, and should need such persons as these to set them an example in such a matter as this!

Notice, next, that *it is sometimes the case that ungodly men are*

contented, as Esau was when he said, "I have enough." This may be because they are persons of easy disposition, who are readily pleased. There are some of whom we say that "they are easy as an old shoe;" and, generally, such people are not worth much more than an old shoe. These very easy-going people never do much in the world; but, still, for all that, they are happy in their easy mode of life. They are naturally satisfied with less than contents others; they look on the bright side of things; they are cheerful from their bodily constitution, being endowed with good health; and their mental conformation, which is not quite so brisk as that of some others, but more calm and quiet,—possibly more stupid, too,—enables them to say more readily than others do, "We have enough."

I have no doubt that, sometimes, ignorance is a help to contentment. Hence the common saying, "If ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise;" which I will not stay to pull to pieces, though it is open to criticism, for a great mistake lies at the bottom of it. But there are some men, who are contented with what they have, because they do not know of anything better. They are perfectly satisfied with their present sphere in life, for they were never out of it. They have always lived on the old farm where their father lived before them, and where their ancestors have lived for many generations; and they do not know of anything better than that. I should not like to transplant the tree that grows so well where it is, and I should be the last to wish to inject cares, and anxieties, and ambitions into the heart of a man who is naturally contented with his lot.

I do not say that this was Esau's case, however. I think he was contented, and said, "I have enough," for quite another reason. Some are contented because they are utterly reckless, and only consider present pleasure. They live from hand to mouth, and never calculate what may happen to-morrow. Laying by for a rainy day seems to them to be preposterous. If they have just sufficient for the passing hour, it is quite enough for them. In some respects, how like this vice is to the virtue which the Christian ought to seek after! Yet it is a vice as we see it in the ungodly; for they are careless, heedless, reckless, as was this man Esau, who, coming in hungry and faint from the chase, sells his birthright for one mess of red pottage, not knowing and not caring what the spiritual value of that birthright might be, but selling it straight away that he might satisfy his hunger. There are some who are contented for this reason, that they do not exercise thought, they do not give due consideration to their true condition, and they say, "We have enough," because they have just sufficient for the time present. Such contentment as that, I do not commend; if any of us have it, may God deliver us from it!

Yet let me notice, next, that *in the contentment of unconverted men, there are some good points.* For, first, it may prevent greed in them. When a man says, "I have enough," you do not expect him to be one of those who grind the faces of the poor, and who must compass sea and land to get more wealth to themselves. Now, in Esau's case, he declined his brother's present until he was pressed

to accept it; and I have no doubt that he honestly declined it, on the ground that he had enough. His brother had planned this gift to propitiate his favour, but he tells him that he does not need it, that he loves him without the present, and he has enough, so does not require it. It is a good thing for a man, even if he has not the grace of God, to be so contented with the things which he has, as not to be covetous of the things of others, for covetousness is a great sin, and is condemned in that commandment which says, "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbour's." So far, contentment is a good thing, if a man is so satisfied with what he has that he does not covet that which belongs to another.

It is also right and proper that he should not have any envious ill-feeling towards others. If others are better off than they are, some people straightway find fault with providence, and are envious and jealous of the person who appears to be more favoured than they are. Esau was not of that mind, for he said to Jacob, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself." There is another sense implied in the Hebrew, "Be that to thee that is thine; may it do thee good; mayest thou use and enjoy it thyself!" I like to hear a man say, "My motto is, 'Live, and let live.' I have enough, and I wish others to have enough, too; and if another man's 'enough' is larger than mine, I am glad he has it. If he is capable of more enjoyment than I am, let him have it; why should not I rejoice in his joy, and thus suck out of the sweets that belong to him some sweetness for myself by being glad that another is not so poor as I am, or so sick as I am, or so feeble as I am, or being glad that there are some who can excel myself, even in the point of earthly happiness?" So far so good, Esau, that you should say, "I have enough."

Still, *there is an evil side to this contentment*, as you must have seen in many who have possessed it. In some people, it has led to boasting. They are so satisfied with everything they have that they are quite sure that nobody else owns anything half so good as what they have. If they have a horse, there is never another horse within a hundred miles that can trot like theirs; if one should go faster, it is because their animal was a little out of condition that day. They think there is no such a farm as theirs, or no such a trade as theirs, or nothing in the world that can be compared with what they have; and they are even foolish enough to tell you so. This very contentment that they have breeds glorying in the flesh, and glorying in their own possessions, all which is evil and obnoxious in the sight of God.

We have also seen it lead to a contempt of divine things; and this is even worse. Esau says, "I have enough," yet he had lost his birthright, he had lost all the blessings of the covenant, he had lost all part and lot in God, and goodness. It is an awful contentment when man can be satisfied without God. What a terrible peace is that when a man is in a peaceful state of mind, although he is unsaved! It is like that dreadful calm, in the tropics, of which we have sometimes read, where there has been no wind for many a day, and the very deep is rotting, and everything seems stagnant

and full of death. There are some men who have reached that kind of contentment in which their conscience is seared as with a hot iron. They want no heaven; earth is their heaven. They desire not to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; to fare sumptuously every day here, is enough bliss for them. They are content not to have the children's portion, and to be scourged because God loves them; they wish to have the lot of the bastard, who is without chastisement, and who is not owned as a son. They have their portion in this life, and that is the worst thing about this kind of contentment, for it argues that God is giving them here all the joy that they will ever have.

Looked at from that standpoint, there was something very dreadful in Esau's saying, "I have enough." If you could have put Jacob in Esau's place, with Jacob's convictions, with Jacob's knowledge of God, with Jacob's desire to be on good terms with God, do you think that he would have said, "I have enough, for I have these camels, and cattle, and sheep, though I have not God"? Oh, no! Jacob would have said, "Enough, my Lord? All this is nothing without thyself. I promised thee, if thou wouldst give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and bring me again to my father's house in peace, I would be thine; but I cannot be content without thee;" so he grasps the Angel of the covenant, and he says to him, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" for he felt that, until God blessed him, he could not say, "I have enough." There is no real contentment to a truly-awakened man until he is at peace with God, and it is a horrible thing for any man to be perfectly satisfied while he is under God's wrath, and in danger of eternal destruction, as he certainly is unless he has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to put a few very sharp thorns into the pillow of any easy-going people here who are content out of Christ. I would even wound you that you may come to Christ for healing, and smite you that you may resort to the great Physician for the cure which he alone can work, for it is a dreadful thing that you should be at ease when you have such grave cause for disquietude. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

II. Now I must pass on to the better part of my subject. HERE IS A GODLY MAN WHO SAYS THAT HE HAS ENOUGH; this is Jacob.

I will begin by remarking that *it is a pity that this is not true of every Christian man.* It is a sad thing when a man is godly, and yet does not say, "I have enough." The apostle does not say that contentment in itself is great gain, but he says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" so that it is not the contentment without the godliness that is the gain; and, on the other hand, any form of godliness that does not bring contentment with it, should be gravely questioned. A godly man, who does not yield ready assent to all God's will, ought to pray to be made a godlier man. That man who says, "I am a Christian," and then murmurs, ought to pray to God to forgive his murmuring, and to make him more of a Christian. It should be a distinguishing mark of a child of God that, even when he is in the greatest agony, and his prayer has the most of disturbance in it, it should never go beyond the line laid down by

Christ himself, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Your heart is breaking, you say, with your troubles. It needs more breaking; for, if it was broken, the trouble would not break it. Where our selfishness and our selfwill come in, there our sorrows begin. What is wanted is not the removal of trouble, but the conquest of self. When the grace of God has brought us to sing from our hearts the verse we sang just now, all will be well with us,—

> "Father, I wait thy daily will:
> Thou shalt divide my portion still:
> Give me on earth what seems thee best,
> Till death and heaven reveal the rest."

When God's will and our will are contrary to one another, we may be sure that there is something amiss with us. We are never right till God's will becomes our will, and we can honestly say, "The will of the Lord be done." Therefore it is a sad thing when a Christian man cannot say, "I have enough;" but it is a very sweet thing when he can truthfully say it. Then does he really enjoy life,—when he thanks God for what he is, and for what he is not,—when he thanks God for health, and also for sickness,—when he thanks God for gains, and also for losses,—when he sings a song in the night, as the nightingale does, as well as a song in the day, as the lark does. He proves then that he does not follow God for what he gets out of him, as stray dogs will follow a man in the street who feeds them; but that he follows God out of sincere love to him, because God is his Master, and he belongs to him. It is true blessedness, a little heaven begun below, when the Christian, looking all round, can say of all temporal things, "I have enough."

It is a still better thing *when the Christian has more than enough.* Jacob was in that condition, for he felt that he could give Esau all those goats, and sheep, and camels, and kine, and bulls, and asses, and yet be able to say, "I have enough." It is a blessing when a godly man feels, "I have more than enough for my own needs, so I am glad that I can help my fellow-Christians. I have great joy and delight in aiding the poor and succouring the needy." When you can sing, with the psalmist, "My cup runneth over," mind that you call somebody to come and catch the spillings; for if you let it run to waste, it may be said of you, "That man cannot be trusted with a full cup." So let it run over where those with empty cups may come and catch it, to moisten their parched lips. It is a good thing when the Christian, even though he has but little, can say, "I have not only enough, but I have a little to spare for others who have less than I have."

The charm of Jacob's "enough" was, that *God had given it to him.* Esau says nothing about God; but Jacob says, "God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough." That is indeed a blessing which we can see comes to us from God,when on every mercy there is the mark of our Father's hand. What are bursting barns if the wheat comes not from God? What are the overflowing wine-vats if the juice of the clusters be not from God? What is the good of

your gold and silver if God has cursed it? But what a blessing it is when God has smiled upon it all, and says to you, "My child, I give you this because you are my child; I make you my steward, and I entrust these earthly things to your keeping because I believe that you will use them for my glory, and for the good of your fellow-creatures." This puts a sweetness into the cup which, otherwise, would not have been there; so that it is a very different thing to be a child of God, and to have enough, and to be a child of the devil, and to have enough. May God grant that we may each one know what it is to say with Jacob, "The Lord hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough"!

The correct rendering of our second text—as you may see by the marginal reading of your Bibles,—is that *Jacob said, "I have all things."* Esau said, "I have enough;" but Jacob said, "I have all things;" and, as Matthew Henry says, "Esau's enough was much, but Jacob's enough was all. He that has much, would have more; but he that thinks he has all, is sure he has enough." Well, he who believes in Christ has all things, for what saith the apostle? "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." They are all yours in this sense,—that all that will be good for you God must give to you, he has pledged himself to this. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." He will therefore not withhold any good thing from you, so that all that is good for you, you are sure to get. All things are yours in the promises, and in the covenant; for that God, who took you to be his portion, has given himself to be your portion, and he is "God all-sufficient." All things are in him, and in possessing him you have all things.

Oh, what privileges are yours, for, listen! *God himself is yours.* "I will be their God," saith he; and that is more than anything else that we can say. Even though all things are yours, you get beyond that when you can say that God is yours. The Eternal Father gives himself to you, with all his glorious attributes, with everything that belongs to him. He gives his very heart to you, "for the Father himself loveth you." The Son of God has loved you, and given himself for you, and he gives himself to you. All the merit of his atoning sacrifice, all the love of his heart, all the wisdom of his head, all the power of his arm, all is yours. His very life is yours, for he says to you, "Because I live, ye shall live also." What an inheritance you have, then, in the Christ of God, and in the God of Christ! But then you have also the Holy Spirit to be yours. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," as in a temple. All light he will bring to you; all life he will maintain in you; all comfort he will bestow upon you; all guidance and all quickening he will give to you. There is nothing which the Spirit of God can work which he will not work in you, according as you may have need of his divine operations. Thus, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all being ours, what a blessed portion we have! I do not wonder that Jacob said, "I have enough," or that he said, "I have all things." Blessed be the name of the Lord who has made it possible for any son of man to say as much as this!

While I was studying this subject, I met with a sweet poem by that choice daughter of song, Miss Havergal. Each verse is upon this subject,—"Enough." I will read the verses one by one, and add only brief remarks, hoping that you may drink in the fulness of their meaning, and say with Jacob, if you are indeed a child of God, "I have enough." The poem begins thus,—

"I am so weak, dear Lord, I cannot stand
One moment without thee!
But oh! the tenderness of thine enfolding!
And oh! the faithfulness of thine upholding!
And oh! the strength of thy right hand!
That strength is enough for me!"

There is to be none of your own strength, you see, and none that you can borrow from your neighbours. You may have many trials, long pilgrimages, great burdens; but God's tenderness will enfold you, God's faithfulness will uphold you, and God's strength will indeed be enough for you. As I read that last line, I felt as if I could fall on my face, and laugh as Abraham did. Omnipotence enough for me? I should think it is! It is enough to uphold this great globe which God has hung upon nothing; it is enough to sustain yon unpillared arch of heaven, which stands firm by the divine might. It is enough for yon sun, that has burned on through all these ages, and whose light has never failed; it is enough for the universe which is almost illimitable; it is enough for every living thing that breathes; it is enough for cherubim, and seraphim, and all the angelic host. Then, of course, it is enough for me,—a little midge dancing up and down in the evening sunlight. Suppose a giant should lend me his strength, and say to me, "It will be enough for you." I should think it would; but that would be little indeed compared with the Almighty God saying to me, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Yes, my Lord, "Thy strength is enough for me."

The next verse of the poem is,—

"I am so needy, Lord, and yet I know
All fulness dwells in thee;
And hour by hour that never-failing treasure
Supplies and fills, in overflowing measure,
My least and greatest need; and so
Thy grace is enough for me!"

You remember how Paul says the Lord spoke to him: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Think what grace there is in Christ Jesus our Lord,—electing grace, calling grace, forgiving grace, renewing grace, preserving grace, sanctifying grace, perfecting grace, grace upon grace, grace that leads to glory. O beloved, all this grace is yours, and surely there is grace enough for you. Why dost thou fear that thou wilt fail? Will God's grace fail thee? Will God's grace forsake thee, and permit thee to perish by the hand of the enemy? Nay, verily, then let each believer say to him. "Thy grace is enough for me."

Miss Havergal next writes,—

"It is so sweet to trust thy Word alone:
I do not ask to see
The unveiling of thy purpose, or the shining
Of future light on mysteries untwining:
Thy promise-roll is all my own,—
Thy Word is enough for me!"

It is very sweet to be able to say of the Lord's promise, "That is enough for me; even if I do not see the fulfilment of it for many a day, the promise itself is enough for me. If the Lord seemeth to do nothing at all for my help, yet, since he has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' his Word is enough for me." Why, beloved, you sometimes make a man's word enough for you, the word of a man whom you can trust; and you say, "His word is his bond." But God's Word is backed by his oath; is not that Word enough for you? If so, why do you fret and worry? Rather, you should say to the Lord, "Thy Word is enough for me."

Then the gracious poetess continues,—

"The human heart asks love; but now I know
That my heart hath from thee,
All real, and full, and marvellous affection,
So near, so human; yet divine perfection
Thrills gloriously the mighty glow!
Thy love is enough for me!"

Can you say that,—you who have lost some dear one, you who are widowed, you who are childless, you who have been deceived and forsaken,—"a woman of a sorrowful spirit,"—a man cast down and lonely? Is God's love enough for you? It ought to be, for if all the loves of husbands, wives, lovers, mothers, fathers, children, were distilled, and the quintessence taken out, it would be but water as compared with the generous wine of God's love. Does God love me? Then, if all the world shall hate me, it matters no more to me than if a single drop of gall should fall into an Atlantic full of sweetness and bliss. This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the exceeding glory of being loved of God. Yes, my Lord, "Thy love is enough for me." It is a great heart that God's love cannot fill; nay, I must correct myself, and say that it is a base heart,—a wicked heart,—an unrenewed heart, that could not be filled with God's love. It is not a broken heart, but a divided heart; and when the heart is divided, it does not retain the love of God. Oh, for a heart united to the heart of God! Then shall I say to him, "Thy love is enough for me."

The sweet poem closes thus,—

"There were strange soul-depths, restless, vast, and broad,
Unfathomed as the sea;
An infinite craving for some infinite stilling;
But now thy perfect love is perfect filling!
Lord Jesus Christ, my Lord, my God,
Thou, thou art enough for me!"

So may it be with each of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

GENESIS XXXII., AND XXXIII. 1—12.

Chapter xxxii. Verses 1, 2. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.*

Jacob was about to enter upon a great trial, and therefore he received a great comfort in preparation for it. God knows when to send angels to his servants; and when they come, it is often as the forerunners of a trial which is to follow them.

3—5. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.*

It has been judged by some that Jacob, in sending such a message to Esau, acted unworthily and unbelievingly; but I think we are not called upon to censure the servants of God in points wherein they are not condemned in Scripture. The elder brother, according to all Eastern customs, was the lord of the family, and Jacob had so grossly injured Esau that it well became him to walk very humbly and to abound in courtesy towards him. Besides, I hope we shall never imagine that the highest faith is inconsistent with the greatest prudence, and that we shall never forget that there is such a book in the Bible as the Book of Proverbs, which contains counsels of wisdom for daily life. That Book of Proverbs is placed not far from the Song of Solomon, which treats of high spiritual communion, as if to teach us that the next-door neighbour to the wisdom that cometh from above which walks with God, is that prudence which God gives to his servants for their dealings with men. He that walks with God will not be a fool, for God is the source of all wisdom, and the man who walks with him will learn wisdom from him.

6—8. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.*

This fear and distress were sad proofs of want of faith on Jacob's part; for where there is strong faith, there may be a measure of human fear, but it will not go to the length of being "greatly afraid and distressed," as he was. In this respect he falls short of his grandfather Abraham; yet, nevertheless, he acts wisely, first with common prudence, and next with uncommon prayerfulness.

9—12. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*

Note the humility of Jacob's prayer. We cannot expect our supplications to speed with God unless we put them upon the footing of free

grace by acknowledging that we have no merit of our own which we can plead before him.

Yet notice also how Jacob reminds God of his promise, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." That is the very pith and marrow of prayer when we can quote the Lord's promise, and say to him, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." You have a strong plea to urge with God when you can say to him, "Thou saidst," for he is a God who cannot lie.

13—16. *And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.*

That also was a very sensible arrangement on Jacob's part, so that his brother might have time to think how he should act, for angry men often do in a hurry what they would not do if they had a little time given them for consideration. Jacob knows this, so he lets Esau's anger have an opportunity to cool down while he watches drove following drove.

17—21. *And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face: peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.*

But in the middle of the night, he was in such deep anxiety concerning his meeting with his brother, and probably still more concerning his position towards his God, that he felt that he must get away alone to pray.

22—24. *And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

It does not say that he wrestled with the man, but "there wrestled a man with him." We call him "wrestling Jacob," and so he was; but we must not forget the wrestling man,—or, rather, the wrestling Christ,—the wrestling Angel of the covenant, who had come to wrestle out of him much of his own strength and wisdom, which, though it was commendable in a measure, and we have commended it, was an evil because it kept him from relying on the strength and wisdom of God.

25. *And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*

So that he fell, or began to fall; but still he gripped the Angel, and would not let him go.

26. *And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

That was grandly spoken.

27. *And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.*

"The supplanter."

28. *And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel:*

"A prince of God."

28, 29. *For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.*

He received what he sought for his necessity, but not what he merely asked out of curiosity.

30—32. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.*

Chapter xxxiii. Verses 1, 2. *And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.*

He placed them in the order of his affection for them, the best-beloved in the rear.

3, 4. *And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.*

God had been very gracious to him, and all his fears were gone, so he met Esau as a brother, not as an enemy, and the four hundred men were willing to become his protectors.

5. *And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.*

There was a considerable number of them altogether, more than enough, I expect most of you would think if you had them; but Jacob did not speak of them disparagingly, but he described them as "the children which God hath graciously given thy servant."

6—10. *Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand:*

For, among Orientals, it is such a common custom to offer and receive presents, that, if they are not accepted, it is regarded as an affront.

10—12. *For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—734, 744, 757.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN COMING TO GOD?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 18TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, December 12th, 1880.

"Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Hebrews xi. 6.

THE apostle had put Enoch down among the heroes of faith; and, to prove that Enoch was a man of faith, he says, "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." "Then," argues Paul, "if he pleased God, he must have been a believing man, for the very lowest form of approach to God needs faith: 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' So, if the very lowest grade of approach to God needs faith, much more does that highest form of it in which a man walks with God so as to obtain the testimony that he pleases God." The argument of the apostle is clear and convincing; if any man shall be pleasing to God, as Enoch was, it must be the result of faith; since, even to come to God at all, in the very first steps that we take, we must have a measure of faith in him, we must at least believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

I. I am not going into the argument so far as it relates to Enoch, but I want you to join with me in examining Paul's statement concerning what is essential in coming to God. That will be my first division, THE ESSENTIALS OF FAITH IN OUR COMING TO GOD.

The first essential is, that *we must believe "that he is,"* we must believe that there is a God,—that these things, which we see, do not spring of themselves, or come by chance, or in any way whatever except that there is a personal God, who created all things, and by whom all things consist. If you do not believe that, you certainly will never come to God. How is it possible for a man to come to One whose very existence he doubts? That matter must be settled, or there cannot be any real coming to God.

More than that, he that would come to God must believe that

there is but one God, that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is the only living and true God. If we are to come to God, —to the God of the Old and the New Testament,—we must accept him as he is there pleased to reveal himself. We must not try to fashion a god such as we would like to have, for that would be idolatry; but we must accept God as he is made known in the Scriptures, and especially as he has manifested himself in Christ Jesus, for it is in him that God has revealed himself to us for the practical purpose of our reconciliation. If we wish really to come to God, it must be by the way in which he has come to us; that is, through his Son, Jesus Christ. Neither, let me add, shall we ever come to God aright unless we ask for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity.

To believe that God is, means, however, much more than this. It means that, when I pray, I believe that he is where I am. I do not know whether any of us have yet been able really to get a grip of this first thought, that God is, for there is something wonderful about that truth; for, if God is, then God is everywhere; so, with what awe and reverence ought we to spend every moment of our lives! There is no place to sin in, for God is there. There is no place in which to trifle, for God is there. There is no place for blasphemy, for God is there: will you blaspheme him to his face? There is no place for rebellion, for God is there: wilt thou rebel against the King in his own courts? This makes all space most solemn, and all time truly sacred. Of every spot of ground whereon we stand, we may say, with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" Though it was a place abounding in stones, which served for his pillows, he said, when he awoke, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

I passed a church, the other day, and I saw on one of its doors the words, "The house of God." I thought, "Is it?" On the next door, I saw the words, "The gate of heaven;" and I said to myself, "It is not so, any more than any other door is." Is this Tabernacle God's house? While we worship him here, it is; but it is not any more holy than our own house is. One place is as sacred as another, for God's presence has consecrated it all. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Every part of my garden, as I meditate upon God in it, is as holy as the aisles of the most venerable cathedral; your bed-chamber, as you kneel in prayer ere you lie down to sleep, is as sacred as the temple of Solomon. Every spot, where there is a devout worshipper, is the abode of Deity; it is no more and no less so in one place than in another.

If you begin to fancy that one place is sacred above others, you will tread there with superstitious reverence; you will scarcely dare to put your foot upon the chancel pavement, and you will bow to the East, as I have seen some do, as if there were something more holy in that direction than at other points of the compass. Ugh! but this is idolatry, and nothing better. The right thing is to look upon the street pavements as too sacred for you to sin there, and to turn to the East or West, to the North or South,

and to say concerning every place, "God is before my eyes there, so that is a sacred spot; God is everywhere, and therefore I must not dare to offend against him anywhere."

They who would come to God must believe that he is everywhere, and that he is specially where they are praying to him. When we pray aright, we speak into God's ear,—into his very heart, for he is wherever there is a praying soul; and when you truly praise him, you are not singing to the wind, for God is there, and he hears you. How solemn would our praise be, and how intense would our prayers be, if we always realized God's presence! Yet, perhaps, when you go to bed, you drop down on your knees, and wearily repeat a few sentences; but you have not really prayed unless you have been conscious that God was there, and you have communed with him. Then, in the morning, if you are late in rising, you hurry over what you call your devotions; but there is no devotion in them unless you believe that God is there, and you really draw near to him in prayer. We should pray, dear friends, in the same spirit as that in which the angels worship before the throne, with covered faces, and in lowly adoration; and thus we should pray if we did really believe in God's presence with us. But for anyone to say, "Yes, I know that there is a God, but I do not realize that he is here; when I am at my work, or at my recreation, I do not feel that he is specially with me;" is a sort of atheism, from which may God, in his great mercy, deliver all of us! If there be a place where God is not, you may go there, and sin; but there is no such spot in the whole universe. Remember what David says: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

The belief that God is, moreover, seems to me to involve, not only that he exists, and is everywhere present, but that he knows what we are doing,—that he perceives the wishes of our hearts,—that he is aware of all that we say, and all that we think. The Epicureans held the theory that God had a great many things to do of far more importance than listening to the prayers of men and women, yet that is not the teaching of the Scriptures. He counts the hairs on our head, and notices the falling of a sparrow to the ground; and he is as truly great in looking upon the lilies of the field, as in ordering the revolutions of the ponderous orbs of heaven.

It is not believing that God is when you say, "Oh, yes, there is a God, and God is everywhere; but, still, he does not concern himself about us, and no practical end will be served by prayer, for he will not interfere in our affairs." Ah, no! you will never come to him in that way, and I do not see any inducement for you to try. I do not want to approach a dead god; there are sufficient dead things in the world to sorrow over without a dead deity. I do not care for the Pantheist's god; what is he? An insensible,

impalpable, something or nothing. I need a personal God, a living Person, a sympathetic Person, a Divine Person, and I find him in that blessed One who is the Son of God, and who, with the Father and the Spirit, is the one living and true God. I hope, dear friends, that you have come as far as this; even if you have not yet actually come to God, I hope you know, in the senses that I have mentioned, that "he is."

But, according to our text, there is a second thing to be believed before we can come to God,—that is, "*that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" By which I understand the apostle to mean that we must believe that God hears prayer, and answers it, too. You will not pray unless you believe that; at least, you will be very foolish, if you do. I suppose there are persons who think that the mere repetition of a certain form of words may do them good, but their intellect must be on a level with that of those who used to think that the word "abracadabra" could cure diseases or keep away ghosts and witches. I am afraid there is a kind of religion which is only on a level with witchcraft; when people think a particular place is sacred, and that a man is holy because he has certain clothes on, and reads out of a holy book, on a holy day, and performs with holy water, and a holy cup to hold it in, and holy this, and holy that,—I know not what,—it is all a mass of silly superstition. Let us keep clear of all that nonsense, and feel that, when we speak with God, there is reality in it, and that God hears us just as surely as we hear one another, and that he is prepared to answer our petitions;—I mean, literally to do so, not in some mysterious, unreal fashion, but actually and truly to give us that which is fitting for him to bestow, and right for us to ask. We cannot pray, as we ought, unless we believe that.

If we are to come to God, we must believe also, that he will bless those who endeavour thus to come to him; and, further, that it is a good thing to know God, to love God, to be reconciled to God, to be under the operations of God's Spirit, to be saved by God's Son. If we do not really believe all this, if we fancy that it is a mere matter of form, and has no vitality in it, we shall not care to come to God, for sensible men do not wish to deal in counterfeits and shams, they want realities.

To put the matter very plainly, he who would truly come to God must believe that a life of godliness will pay,—that it will answer his purpose to come to God, because "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." A man with any sense will not follow after that which he conceives has no advantage in it; but when a man can honestly say, "The best interests of my highest nature depend upon my getting to God, becoming his servant, and having him as my Father and my Friend," then it is that he diligently seeks him. Dear friends, I believe that, if you would have the best of life, the highest bliss, the supremest, noblest, divinest joys of which our mortal nature is capable, you cannot find all this anywhere but in coming to God, through Jesus Christ his Son, and yielding yourselves up entirely to him, and becoming his faithful

followers for ever. We must believe that diligently to seek him is the most profitable thing possible to us, or we shall never rightly come to God. Some will say, "To be moderately religious is a good thing, no doubt; but to be righteous overmuch, would be a very bad thing." Ah! you will never come to God if that is what you think; for, depend upon this, of all the miserable things in the world, a little religion is about the worst of all. I know some men who have just about enough religion not to be able comfortably to sin, but they have no comfort in Christ. The joys of the world, —and it has its delusions which worldlings call joys,—they dare not go after; and for want of faith they dare not claim the joys of the Spirit of God; so they are wretched. They are like bats, which fly by night, or which, in the twilight, come out, and get a little exercise. They are between-ites,—if there is such a word,—neither servants of God, nor yet out-and-out servants of Satan,—a miserable crew; let none of us belong to them. That man gets the most out of godliness who gives himself most to it. He whom the world calls a fanatic is often just the one who is thorough, sincere, and earnest; and he it is who finds that God is his rewarder, because he diligently seeks him;—not only seeks him, but seeks him with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.

II. This brings me to my second division, which is this. COMING TO GOD SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF ANY MAN'S HAVING THESE ESSENTIALS. I thought, as I looked upon this great assembly, that there might be a few here who doubted whether there was a God, or whether God was "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" but I know that almost everyone here says, "I believe there is a God, I never doubted it; and I believe that it is a good thing, a blessed thing, to serve him."

Very well, then, *as you believe that there is a God, seek him.* If I am addressing any who have been delivered from infidelity in the head, I want you also to be delivered from practical infidelity of the heart. Reason itself says to you, "If there be a God, and God is all around you, how can you continue to be his enemy?" Now, friend, if thou believest that there is a God, canst thou sit easily on thy seat so long as the Omnipotent One is angry with thee? Bow thy head, and confess thy transgression to him; pray to him to forgive thee for Christ's sake, to be reconciled to thee, and to reconcile thee to himself; for he has promised that he will forgive those who confess their transgressions to him, and who come unto him through Christ Jesus his Son. If there be a God, O ye burdened ones, ye weary ones, ye feeble ones, ask him to help you. You have no helper, perhaps, on earth; then cast yourself at his feet, and see what he can do for you. If you do indeed believe that God is,—that the Ever-merciful lives, and hears and pities those who trust him, rely upon his care now, and come unto him with your heartbreaking grief.

As there is a God, I am sure I do but reason rightly when I say, *then let us serve him.* Is it not right that he should be our Master, seeing that he made us, and that his service is so glorious that he makes into kings all those who enter it? Come, my soul, enlist afresh

in the army of Emmanuel; and you who have not yet served him, yield yourselves up to him this very hour. As there is a God, we cannot be happy apart from him; and there is no happiness like that of having him for our Friend and Helper. Come, then, dear hearts, can you refuse this invitation? If you say, "There is no God," I am not speaking to you just now; but if you say, "Oh, yes! I know that God is, and that he is here, and I believe in Father, Son, and Spirit;—prove that you really believe in God by yielding to him, by being reconciled to him, by obeying him, by trusting his Son, and so finding eternal life. God grant you may!

Further, *if you believe that God is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," come unto him.* You say, "Oh, yes! I know that a Christian life is a happy life; I believe that the service of God is one that pays, that it is full of rewards, and full of happiness." Very well, then, will you not enter at once upon that service which has such gracious rewards attached to it? Will you not run away from your old master? You need not give him any notice; the prodigal did not. He was sent into the fields to feed swine, but he never gave his master a day's notice; if he had waited to do that, he would never have come away. He slipped right off, and left the swine to eat all the husks. I advise you to act in the same fashion. "Steal away to Jesus," without any delays, or hesitation, or questioning. I do not think that any man gets saved by thinking about it, and saying that it shall be by-and-by. No; now is the all-important moment; strike while the iron is hot, and, by God's grace, that one blow shall break the fetter, and set the captive free.

As there is a God, and he is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," it behoves us, who do seek him, to seek him with the utmost diligence. David said, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous;" and though it is not of debt, but of grace, yet there is a reward, and we find it to be so even now. Let us, therefore, give ourselves more than ever to prayer and to Christian service, and more than ever let us devote ourselves to his glory whose we are, and whom we serve.

Let me pull thee by the sleeve, my brother,—thou who sayest, "I am a Christian." You believe that God is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" do *you* seek him diligently? How much of the Scriptures have you read during the last week? How many hours have you spent in prayer? "Hours?" say you; "say minutes." How much have you lived for God during the past month? What have you done distinctly with a view to his glory? What souls have you tried to win? What truths have you tried to teach? What virtues have you tried to set forth? Thou sayest that he is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" dost thou despise the reward? Art thou content with having made a profession of religion? Some professors remind me of the reply of the child, who was asked at the Sunday-school about her father, who never went to any place of worship. "Is your father a Christian, Jane?" "Yes," she replied, "but he has not worked much at it lately." There are many professors of that sort; they

are like certain tradesmen, who have a notice on their door to say that they have gone out for a fortnight. They will not make a fortune in that way, I am persuaded; such a method of doing business generally ends in bankruptcy. What can I say of some professedly Christian people? They have no stock, they are doing no business for their Master, and their chief employment is that of asking,—

"Do I love the Lord, or no?"

Just so, brother; that is what I was thinking about you.

"Am I his, or am I not?"

Just so, sister; it is quite right of you to ask that question, and there are a good many more who are asking it concerning you; but why should you and I live in such a way that we are obliged to ask these questions? He who is, by God's grace, bringing forth fruit to God's glory does not need to sing that sorrowful tune; so may God grant to all his professing people grace to be thorough, to give themselves up to the utmost diligence in his holy service, for it can only be by his grace that we shall do this!

III. Now I close by bearing testimony to the fact that THE RESULT OF COMING TO GOD WILL JUSTIFY THE ACT OF COMING, AND THE FAITH WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE COMING.

First, *many have come to God*, so they must have had faith in him, for no man can come to God without believing "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." There have been men, who have believed this, who have not come to God; but there have been others who have come to God because they believed in him. In the olden time, Abraham rose up early in the morning, and went to a certain place where he prayed, and where God met with him, and spoke with him in words which Abraham could hear. God does not now utter words which our ears can hear; yet there are men—and they are honest, upright, truthful men,—who will tell you solemnly that they have often met with God, and have been as certain of his special presence as of their own existence. There have been times when our fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, has been as real to us as the atmosphere which we cannot see, but which we breathe. We cannot see God; yet "in him we live, and move, and have our being;" and we have been conscious of it. There is a mystic touch that comes not from any angelic hand; there is a sacred breathing upon the heart which comes not from mere wind; there is a whisper within the soul—a movement, a stirring, a brooding, an overshadowing,—I cannot describe it, but I have often felt it, and so have many of you, and you have been sure that God has come to you, and that you have come to God. I am bearing witness to what is as sure a fact to me as that I am speaking to you now; and it is not a fact to me alone, but to hundreds and thousands of living men and women to whom this life is made happy because they dwell with God, and abide in Christ Jesus.

Beside that, having come to God, *we have found that God is.* It has not been a dream, but a blessed reality. We have struggled to get to God; we have prayed to him; we have cried to him; we have longed for him; and we deliberately declare that God has come to us. When he has come to us, has there been any reality about it? Reality? Why, he has sometimes lifted us up out of the horrible pit of despair into unutterable ecstasies of joy. At times, when we have cried out to him in our distress, he has walked over the waters, and they have been like marble beneath his feet; and very soon, all has been calm and peaceful within our spirit. Tell us that God is not real, when we have been almost on the verge of sin,—one more step, and we should have been over the precipice,—but we have seen him, and we have started back; or, on the other hand, we were shirking a duty which seemed too hard for us, but we realized his presence, and then we shouldered the load; and though it seemed as heavy as the world, we became like Atlas, by God's strength, and so we were able to bear the burden. Do you think I talk too boldly? Perhaps you are a bigger man than I am; if so, talk according to your size; but, to me, it has been enough to have been helped of God in my little world; and it has been the same with many a poor widow with half-a-dozen children about her. You may say, "Her case is a very small affair." It is not small to her; and when she has gone before the living God, with that heavy load which to her is like a world, God has helped her, and has been the Advocate of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless; and it has not been in a dream, or in sentimental fiction, but in sober reality. I could find you many who would bear witness to such deliverances as this, and they would declare that God is.

They have also found that *God rewards them.* Does he? I will answer in the name of them all,—Yes, he does. How does he reward them? Well, sometimes, in a measure, in this life. He gives to his children, as he did to Abraham and to Isaac, happiness and prosperity, so that, even in this life, they feel that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. But this is not the greatest reward he gives. He gives himself to his children, he becomes their portion. They are poor, and sick, and heavy-hearted; but he comes to them, as he did to Abraham, and says, "Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." He himself is their reward; and, possessing him as their God, they are happier without the riches of this world than the wealthiest man can be without God. Ask the Lord's servants how they get on with their Master. There are so many of them that, if he were not faithful, some one or other would tell the story. It is a thing that ought to be noticed, that, out of the millions of Christians who have died,—and death-beds are places where people usually speak the truth,—there has never been an instance of one person sitting up in his bed, and saying, "I am sorry I ever served the Lord. I regret that I was so diligent in seeking him, for I found no reward in it. My life would have been a great deal happier if I had served myself, or lived for the world; but I made a mistake, and I lived for God."

Now, surely, if this were the fact, there would have been one or two somewhere who would have said it; but the universal testimony —there is no exception—of all dying children of God has been this, "We wish we had sought him earlier, and loved him more, and served him better; we wish we had been more consecrated to him, and had practised more self-denial, and given more generously to his cause; for, after all, the reality of our life lies in what he did for us, and in what he enabled us to do for him. All the rest was but the chaff of life; the best of our life is what we lived by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us." They all say so; and, therefore, we must accept their testimony. If a mistress has a large number of maids, somebody might ask them, "What kind of mistress have you?" and they might all say, "Oh, she is a most delightful person," and so on, because they were afraid to speak the truth; but if there should be a dozen of them, by-and-by one would be found in the street, who would say, "You heard what those maids said, but it was not true, for she is a termagant." The truth would ooze out somehow; and if our God were not faithful, one or other of his servants would be sure to tell of it; but we have none of us anything to complain of.

"But," say you, "there are many of God's people, who serve him faithfully, and they do not get any reward; they are very poor and needy." Yet they will tell you that they are more than satisfied with the way their Lord has treated them; and, moreover, they will tell you that they are strangers and pilgrims here, and that their chief reward is yet to come. They are looking, by faith, for the everlasting remunerations that will follow the life of holiness, when this poor world and all its joys shall have melted like the morning mist, and gone for ever. Eternity, eternity, eternity,—we shall soon know, brothers and sisters, what it will be to be in eternity. There is not one of us who can live here for ever. When a very few years have gone, we shall all have departed. Imagine yourselves in the future state; if you have not lived for God, but have lived for the world, for yourself, what is your portion? Endless darkness; infinite despair; woe unutterable. But if you have lived for God; if, by his grace, you have put your trust in Jesus Christ, what is your portion? On yonder glittering hills you stand, in the midst of the white-robed host, and Christ is with you, and you are looking back upon what you suffered for his sake on earth, and you say, "Oh, it was nothing at all; I wish I had suffered far more for him who suffered so much for me!" As for what you did for him, you will say, "That is not worth mentioning; oh, that I had lived more intensely for him!" As for what you gave for him, "Oh!" you will say, "I never gave a thousandth part of what I would give now if I had it. I reckon that I wasted what was not spent upon his Kingdom; I reckon that I lost the time that I did not use for glorifying him; and only did I live as I ought to live, and as in heaven I now wish I had lived, when I lived entirely to him." Then will you see, from before the throne of God, that "he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

So may it be with every one of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HEBREWS XI.

These men, of whom we are now briefly to read, are a company of God's witnesses; and the apostle calls them, in the next chapter, "a cloud of witnesses," who, from their lofty seats above, are watching us who are now running the Christian race.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

Those of the olden time, who were men of noble character, won that character by their faith.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

Things that we see were not made out of things that we see. They were brought out of the unseen by the word of God; so that, really, the word of God is the foundation of everything that has been formed by him; and, after all, things material—created and seen—are not truly substantial. They are but shadows; the real substance is that which never can be seen, even the ever-blessed God, whose voice—whose word—created the heavens and the earth.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

All down the ages, the faith of Abel has continued bearing witness to God. Oh, that we might have Abel's faith, and offer to God *the* Lamb,—even Christ Jesus,—that we also may be accepted for his sake!

5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Mark that this holiest of men, whose walk with God was so close and unbroken that he was permitted to escape the pangs of death, nevertheless did not attain to this high position by his own works, but by faith.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

See how faith within a man masters all his emotions. Noah, in preparing the ark, was "moved with fear;" but that fear, instead of hampering him, was yoked with his faith, and so was turned to practical account. Oh, for an overcoming faith, which shall hold our entire nature in check, or which shall employ every part of our being for its own high and noble purposes!

8. *By faith Abraham,—*

To whom Paul devotes a long passage, because he is the father of the faithful, the greatest exponent of faith that we have ever met with: "By faith Abraham,"—

8, 9. *When he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles—*

That is, in tents—

9, 10. *With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

And he was content to be a pilgrim and wanderer till he should reach that city ; he was quite willing to dispense with all present comfort for the sake of that glorious future which God set before the eyes of his faith.

11—13. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

What a sweet word that is, "embraced them"! First, they were sure the promises were true ; they "were persuaded of them." But, next, they laid hold of them, pressed them to their hearts, they "embraced them." And then, further, they practically showed the fruit of their faith by confessing that "they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

14—15. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

But, now, faith has no thought of going back ; her face is set like a flint to go towards the heavenly city, forsaking every earthly joy for the sake of the eternal future.

16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for he hath prepared for them a city.*

For they are not ashamed to look forward to the future for their chief joy ; and God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared that chief joy for them.

17—19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called : accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

See how Abraham spied out the great doctrine of the resurrection. Though almost driven to desperation, he would not give up his faith in God. He was bidden to believe two apparently opposite things ;—first, that in Isaac should his seed be called ; and, secondly, that he must offer up Isaac ;—but he bridged the two by believing another grand truth, that God was able to raise up Isaac, "even from the dead." Whenever there are two things, revealed to you in Scripture, which you cannot quite reconcile, you may always believe that, between them, there lies something more glorious still, which your dim eyes as yet are scarcely able to perceive.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

It was blundering faith, for Jacob deceived his father, and Isaac himself made mistakes in giving his blessing ; yet even his mistakes were all right in God's sight. It was by faith that he blessed both his sons, and therefore I gather that a faith which blunders, if it be faith in God, is an acceptable faith.

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph ; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

Grasping that memorable staff with which he "passed over this Jordan," —that staff on which he leaned so heavily when the wrestling angel made him go limping over Penuel,—that staff which was a memorial of the breaking down which he had suffered when he gained the name of Israel by prevailing with his God,—on that staff he leaned as he "blessed both the sons of Joseph."

22. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*

A sure proof that he believed they would come out of Egypt, for he would not be buried among the Pharaohs, though a prominent place would have been assigned to him there; but he would have his bones lie with those of his ancestors, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

23—33. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,—*

Which is quite as great a thing as subduing kingdoms.

33. *Obtained promises,—*

Which, by being put in this connection, seems to be as blessed a thing as working righteousness.

33—35. *Stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured,—*

Is this also a feat of faith? Yes; instead of showing their faith by putting their enemies to flight, they prove it by enduring all manner of tortures without shrinking.

35—39. *Not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

Christ did not come in their day; the hour for the fulfilment of the great promise had not then struck.

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they—*

Even they, great as they are,—

40. *Without us should not be made perfect.*

There is a something for us, whose lot is cast in these latter days, to bring, which shall complete the circle and choir of the Church of Christ, for they without us could not be made perfect. The Lord grant us grace to be ready for our share in that glorious consummation, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 997, 993, 846.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 25TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, in the summer of 1859.

"By grace ye are saved."—Ephesians ii. 5.

THE cardinal error against which the gospel of Christ has to contend is the effect of the tendency of the human heart to rely upon salvation by works. The great antagonist to the truth as it is in Jesus is that pride of man which leads him to believe that he can be, at least in part, his own saviour. This error is the prolific mother of multitudes of heresies. It is through this falsehood that the pure stream of truth hath been tainted; so that, instead of flowing on in one clear limpid river, it hath been sadly polluted. There have been many who have sought to hinder the flowing of the water of life, or to divert the stream from its proper current. Many have tried to mingle the fancies and fallacies of men with the truth as it is in Jesus, in order thereby to make it more palatable to poor, fallen, human nature.

It is my belief that all great reforms in the Church of Christ must have for their basis the declaration of the doctrine revealed in my text: "By grace ye are saved." The tendency of the Church, like that of the world, is to fly away from this truth, which is really the sum and substance of the gospel. A departure from this doctrine is, in my opinion, the essence of those many errors which, springing up from time to time, have troubled and divided the Church, and marred the beauty of the spouse of Christ.

In all times, whenever this doctrine has been obscured, the Church has become either heretical or Laodicean. She has either held some dangerous and damnable heresy, or she has held only a portion of the truth, and held it with so feeble a grasp that it has lost its ancient power in her hands, so that her enemies have prevailed against her. The mightiest men in all ages of the Church's history, those who have been the means of bringing the greatest good into her midst, and the most usefulness into the wide world, have been those who, rising up like Samson when called to do valiant deeds on

behalf of Israel, have made this the distinguishing characteristic of their ministry, the doctrine of salvation by grace in contradistinction of salvation by works.

In Augustine's day, there had been a grievous falling away from the simplicity of the gospel; and when he arose, and preached to the world this glorious truth, there was an influence for good which, I believe, staved off the great Romish heresy, at least for a time. Had the Church and the world but listened to his voice, and accepted his teaching, Popery would have been an impossibility.

Then later, when Romanism had waxed exceedingly strong, the Lord raised up Martin Luther, who taught this as the great central truth of Christianity, that sinners are justified by faith, and not by works. After Luther came another distinguished teacher of the doctrine of grace,—John Calvin, a man far better instructed in the truth of the gospel than even Martin Luther was;—and he pushed this grand doctrine to its legitimate consequences. Luther had, as it were, undammed the stream of truth, by breaking down the barrier which had kept back the living waters in the great reservoir; but the stream was turbid, and carried down with it much that ought to have been left behind. Then Calvin came, and cast salt into the waters, and purified them, so that they flowed on in a clear, sweet, limpid stream, to gladden and refresh the Church of God, and to quench the thirst of poor parched sinners.

Calvin preached, as his great staple doctrine, the great truth in my text: "By grace ye are saved." It is common, in these days, to call those ministers, who dwell mainly upon this doctrine, "Calvinists." But we do not accept that title without qualification. We are not ashamed of it, and we would rather be called "Calvinists" than have any other name except that which is our true one. We hold, and assert again and again, that the truth which Calvin preached, the truth which Augustine thundered out with all his might, was the very truth which the apostle Paul had long before written in his inspired Epistles, and which is most clearly revealed in the discourses of our blessed Lord himself. We desire to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We are not the followers of any mere man; we do not derive our inspiration from Calvin's Institutes and Commentaries, but from the Word of God itself. Yet we hold the doctrines commonly called "Calvinism" to be none other than the essential basement doctrines of our holy faith. These were the truths that Whitefield preached, and that produced the great revival in his days; and these must be the doctrines to which the Church of God must again return, if the Church of Rome is to be razed to its deep foundations, or souls to be converted in great multitudes, or the kingdom of Christ to come.

My text relates to the doctrine of salvation by grace; and, coming to it, I ask you to notice, first, that *the apostle addresses certain people who were saved.* Next, I want you to notice *the meanings of the term "grace" as applied in the Scriptures;* and I shall finish with *some consolatory and practical inferences.*

I. In the first place, THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES CERTAIN PEOPLE, TO-

WHOM HE SAYS, "YE ARE SAVED." He does not say, "Ye shall be saved;" or, "Ye hope to be saved;" he speaks to them as persons already "saved." Now, there are no people, on the face of the earth, who can be correctly described as "saved" unless it can also be said of them that they are saved by grace.

I see two things in this part of my text; and, first, *the apostle mentions a present salvation.* He speaks not to people who were to be saved when they died, or who hoped to be saved in some future state; but he addresses those who actually were saved,—who had salvation, not in prospect, but in present enjoyment,—who had passed out of a state of condemnation into that of salvation, and who looked upon their salvation as being as surely, as certainly, as really theirs, as their houses, their lands, or their lives.

A present salvation cannot consistently be preached by any beside those who hold the doctrine that salvation is by grace. Is there a Roman Catholic, in the whole world, who, in harmony with his own creed, can say that he is saved? No, there is not one; in fact, lying as that creed is, it does not profess to put anyone into a position in which he can say, "I am saved." Nay, the Romish Church not only postpones salvation to the day of death, but positively beyond it. There was Daniel O'Connell, of whom the Pope said that he was his greatest subject in Europe; yet it is not many years ago that we were informed that he was in purgatory. It was a hard thing that such a faithful disciple of the Pope should be sent there, yet he was no worse off than the bishops, and archbishops, and cardinals; for, according to the Romish teaching, they all go to purgatory. Of course, the Pope lets them out after a certain time; but that is all he professes to offer,—salvation after a future indefinite period;—but he never pretends to say to anyone, "You are saved now." That would be a lie too gross even for the Pope and priests of Rome to utter; there is no such thing as a present salvation in the whole of the Romish Church.

Nor is this possible under any system except that of salvation by grace. Bring up the good Dissenters, and the good Churchmen, the men and women who are regular in their attendance on outward ordinances. Whatever the ceremonies of their church may be, they observe them with the most indefatigable industry. They have been "baptized" and confirmed; they have "taken the sacrament," or sat at the communion table;—according to the phraseology of their different churches;—and they believe that, by their constant attention to the outward observances of worship, they will assuredly be saved. But speak to any one of these people, and ask if he can say, "I know that my sins are forgiven;" he will be astonished at your enquiry, and will reply, "I would not have the presumption to say such a thing."

Appeal to the very best of them, the most devoted, the most earnest, the most indefatigable of those who are seeking salvation by their own works, and ask if they have obtained eternal life. You cannot find one who has done so; they are all hoping that, through the mercy of God, they may somehow and sometime be saved; but none of them will declare that they are saved now. From those

who join us in church-fellowship, I frequently hear such remarks as this, "I attended my church every day in the week; I repeated the prayers regularly; but I never found any rest to my soul until I trusted wholly in Christ." From others, who attended certain Dissenting places of worship, I have had such expressions as this, "I went up to the house of God, and I heard my minister exhort me to be patient in sickness, to love my God and my neighbour, and I tried to do my best to obey his exhortations; but I never could say that I was a saved man, or use the confident language of the spouse, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am his,' until I learned that salvation is all of grace, and trusted in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

No, my dear friends, under the theory of salvation by works, whatever form it may take,—whether it appears in the garb of Popery, or hides itself under the veil of Protestantism,—it is always substantially the same. A man's own works cannot pretend to offer to him the blessing of a present salvation. Take the Arminian theory, which is the least objectionable of all forms of salvation by works, cut it asunder, and you will find that there is a strong taint of Popery even there.

"But," asks someone, "do not Arminians rejoice to say that they are already saved?" Yes; but their assertion is contradicted by the assurance, which they will give you directly afterwards, that they may finally perish. Although they are saved now, their safety is something like that of a wrecked mariner who, after being tossed to and fro in a stormy sea, is washed up on to a rock, from which he may presently be hurled back into the raging billows. Their safety is not like that of the man who has been carried into the lighthouse, or brought to land in the lifeboat; for they believe that, after all they have experienced, they may be lost. It is not salvation that the Arminian possesses; he is only in a salvable state. His condition is that of a man who, if he continues to repent and believe, shall be saved; but he is not saved now, he has not been built upon that sure, certain, solid foundation upon which the true believer is resting. He cannot sing, with Toplady,—

"The terrors of law, and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.

"My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Such a salvation as that—a present one, enjoyed now in all its fulness, in all its riches, in all its boundless lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights,—is not possible under any other system but that of salvation by grace, and by grace alone. We, of all men

living, who preach the doctrine of salvation by grace, can proclaim a present salvation in all its fulness.

In our text, we also see that *the apostle speaks of a perfect salvation.* We teach that, the moment a man believes in Christ, he is not merely put into a salvable state, not half saved; not placed in a position where, if he remains, he will be saved, but concerning which there is a fear that he may fall from it; but that he is already completely saved. I verily believe that the saints in heaven, albeit they have received the crown of salvation, are not, as to its essential reality, more truly saved than the meanest and weakest believer in Christ who is struggling through floods of temptation here upon earth.

For what is it to be saved? It is to have sin forgiven, and to be "accepted in the Beloved." The moment a sinner believes in Jesus, his sins are as much pardoned as they ever will be; they are as fully and as finally blotted out of God's Book of remembrance as they would be if he should live a thousand years of piety. He is as completely clear, so far as the forgiveness of his sins is concerned, as he will be when he stands at the right hand of the Judge at the last great day.

To be saved, however, includes more than forgiveness of sins; it includes the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; and, in this sense also, the meanest believer in him is as much saved as the celestial spirits in the Paradise above. Is the robe of Christ's righteousness spread over the apostles? So is it, at this hour, around the poorest person on earth who is trusting in Jesus. Are those who sing God's praises, before his throne in glory, clothed in the fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints? Even so are all believers here below. Each saint is, as John Kent says,—

> "With his spotless vesture on,
> Holy as the Holy One."

Covered with Christ's righteousness, God sees no spot in his people.

"But," asks someone, "are not the saints in heaven more secure than believers on earth?" Believers on earth are not secure from temptation, but they are secure from destruction; not from tribulation, but from condemnation. They are not exempt from care, and woe, and suffering, but they are for ever delivered from the wrath of God and the damnation of hell. Not an angel in heaven is more certain of the eternal love of God than is the feeblest believer upon earth. If thy soul is committed to the hands of Christ, thou canst never perish. I speak no more strongly than his own utterances warrant, for he has said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." To the woman at the well of Sychar, our Saviour said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." We are complete in him,—perfected in all the essentials of salvation.

Now, mark you, under no system of doctrine whatever is perfect

salvation in this world contemplated except under that scheme which teaches that we are saved by grace. Under the plan of salvation proposed by the workmongers, there is no completeness in any of its aspects. Under the old Mosaic dispensation, in which God most clearly revealed himself as the Judge of his people, all "those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually" could not "make the comers thereunto perfect." There was, "in those sacrifices, a remembrance again made of sins every year." However attentive they might be to all the observances of the ceremonial law, their salvation was not perfect. But Christ, "by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and, therefore, he hath "sat down on the right hand of God."

Now if, under that noblest form of the covenant of works, complete salvation was not to be secured, how is it likely to be attained in any of those corrupt systems in which, while men profess to set aside the old covenant of works, they yet expect to find salvation? No man but he who believes the doctrines of grace talks about being completely saved. Ask the Arminian—the fairest and best specimen, sometimes the best of men, though miserably mistaken as to his beliefs,—what can he say? He tells you that, if he perseveres in well-doing, in faith, and in repentance, he will be saved. Ask him whether he is completely saved, or whether there is something more yet to be done; and he will tell you that there is many a step yet to be taken before he will reach full salvation. He may talk about a finished righteousness, but he does not know how it is attained.

We hold that believers are complete in Christ even now, and that, die whenever they may, they will enter into his presence as being already perfect in him. Oh, how sweet it is to enjoy a present salvation, which is, at the same time, a perfect salvation! How grateful should we be that it is presented to us in the covenant of grace, and that it is revealed to us in those blessed portions of Holy Scripture which tell us of the wonderful grace of God which he has manifested towards his people! "Ye are saved." Oh, how sweet are these words! Pause, beloved, a moment or two, and rejoice over them. "Ye are saved,"—saved now, at this present instant,—if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Now we are to notice THE MEANINGS OF THE TERM "GRACE" AS EMPLOYED IN THE SCRIPTURES: "By grace ye are saved."

First, it means that, if we are saved, it must be *a matter of free favour*. There is nothing in us that could ever merit God's esteem, or give him such delight as to lead him to bestow upon us the blessings of eternal salvation. If we ask why any individuals are rescued from the ruins of the Fall, and enabled to believe in Jesus, the only answer is, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Certainly, we were not saved because of our talents, for the most talented often remain unconverted. We were not saved because of our wealth, for most of us have none. We were not saved because of the excellence of our disposition, or the holiness of our character; for, even since our conversion, we cannot think of our best services without shame and confusion of face. If I look upon the people of God either in the mass or as individuals, instead of

imagining that there was anything in them to cause God to love them, I am compelled to say that there seems to have been far more to move him to destroy them than to save them. Will not all believers here confess that they are saved, not because of anything good in them, but because of grace most full, and free, and unconstrained?

Further, we are saved by grace as *a matter of divine operation.* From the first holy desire in the soul, to the last shout of victory in the dying hour, salvation is by the operation of the Almighty. Whatever is not wrought in you, by God's grace, will be an injury, not a blessing, to you. If any of you have a faith, or a repentance, or any condition of heart or life, which is of your own making, get rid of it, for there is nothing of good in it. That so-called faith, which is not the gift of God, is really presumption; and that repentance, which is not godly sorrow wrought by God in the soul, needs to be repented of. Sure I am that all there is of good in any saint must have been put there by the Holy Spirit, for it would not have sprung up of itself. Human hearts will naturally grow weeds, but not those rare exotics, those flowers of heaven, the Christian graces. These must be divinely implanted, and nurtured, and grow up entirely by the exercise of that same omnipotence which raised Christ from the dead.

I will go even further, and say that, if divine grace should carry us every inch of the road to heaven but one, we must be lost because of that last inch. If, in the edifice of our soul's salvation, there is even one stone left for us to put in its place, unassisted by God's grace, that building will never be completed. From first to last, all must be of grace. I agree with the highest doctrinalist upon this point, that there is not, and there cannot be, a good thing in the heart of any man if it was not wrought there by the sovereign grace of God.

"Well, but," says one, "is it not the duty of men to repent and to believe?" Certainly it is; but I am not speaking of their duty. Their want of power does not excuse them from obedience to God's command. If a man owed another a thousand pounds, it would be his duty to pay his debt, whether he had the ability or not; and inasmuch as it is man's duty to repent and to believe, herein is the glory of God's grace made manifest, in that he accomplishes, by his grace, what man could never have done. I can truly say that, so far as I have gone in the divine life, there has been nothing good in me but that which has come from God. Let others give their own testimony; if they have any good thing which they themselves have produced, let them glory in it; but I have nought whereof to glory, and must say to the Lord, "Thou hast wrought all my works in me so far as they have been any good; but, as for myself, I would cover my face, and cry, 'Unclean, unclean, unclean.' Lord, have mercy upon thy servant!"

III. Now, to close, I want to draw SOME CONSOLATORY AND PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

First, *how humble that man ought to be who is saved by grace!* The Arminian says that he can stand or fall according to his own will.

Ought he not to be proud? What a fine fellow he is! Sing a psalm in your own honour, sir; and when you get to heaven, take all the glory to yourself. You say that you have done part yourself; you admit that the Lord did a great deal for you, but that your own free will settled the matter. Very well, then, give the glory to your own self, sing your own praises for ever and ever. But the true believer says, "I was as clay in the hands of the potter when the Lord began with me. I was senseless, dead, corrupt, till the Lord took me in hand, and quickened and changed me, and made me what I am; and I should go back to what I was before if he did not keep me by his grace. But I know that what his grace has commenced, he will certainly complete, and to him be all the glory!"

Next, if we are saved by grace, *we, of all people, should have compassion on those who are out of the way.* If we are in the road to heaven, we were brought into it by grace, and therefore we ought to be very considerate of those who are not in it. That good man, John Newton, used to say, "A Calvinist, who gets angry with the ungodly, is inconsistent with his profession. He knows that no man can receive this doctrine except by the grace of God; so, if God has not given to these men the grace to receive this doctrine, rather pray for them than get angry with them, and ask that they may receive the truth in which your soul delights."

Then, once again, here is *a word of comfort.* If we are saved,—are saved, mark,—what shall make us sad and unhappy at heart? "Oh!" says one, "I am so poor." Yes, but you are saved; you are a believer in Christ, so you are saved. "But," says another, "I am so afflicted." Yes, but you are saved. "But," says another, "I am often so neglected and despised." Yes, but you are saved. Oh, what joy would that thought have caused, a little while ago, when the burden of all your sins was upon you! You used to say, "Oh, if I could but be sure that I was saved, I would not mind if I had nothing but a crust of bread and a cup of water! If I could but know that my sins were forgiven, I would not mind being shut up anywhere in the world. If I might know that I was Christ's, the world might say what it liked about me." Now you do know it, for you are on the Rock, and you are saved; so. why are you sad? You may be despised now; but, remember, the time is coming when you shall be glorified with Christ. You may be forgotten by your friends now; but your Saviour's eye is on you, and your name is on his heart. You are sad; yes, but you are secure. If you believe in Jesus, you may be cast down, but you cannot be destroyed; you may be forsaken for a while, but you can never be cast away. Come then,—

> "Children of the heavenly King,
> As ye journey sweetly sing;
> Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
> Glorious in his works and ways."

Lastly, *one word to those who cannot say that they are saved.* My dear friends, there is very much in this text that should cheer and comfort you. The men who are saved are saved by grace; that

is, by God's free favour. There was nothing in them to recommend them to God. You have been confessing, "O Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel." He does not want your feelings as a recommendation. If saved, you are to be saved as a matter of free favour, and not as a matter of merit, in any sense whatever. "But," says one, "I cannot repent, I cannot believe." My dear friend, you are not going to be saved by anything that you can do in your own strength. You want repentance. Do not try to work it for yourself; the Lord will work repentance in you. You want faith. Do not go about to seek faith in yourself; you will never find it there; seek it from Christ. He is the Author as well as the Finisher of faith.

"By grace ye are saved." Go and carry this text into every den and sty of pollution in London. Tell it to the murderer, the thief, the blasphemer, the harlot; tell it to the man who cannot repent, and cannot pray, and cannot believe. Tell him that salvation is by grace, and is wrought in us by God the Holy Ghost; and, as the hymn says,—

> "Heaven with the echo shall resound,
> And all the earth shall hear."

Go, then, my brethren, and spread the doctrine of salvation by grace; for this old watchword of the Church is the source of her victory; and when once this shall be her battle-cry, her triumph is sure. The headstone of God's spiritual temple shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 CORINTHIANS XII., AND XIII. 1—3.

Chapter xii. Verses 1, 2. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

Although the members of the church at Corinth were highly favoured with spiritual gifts, they do not seem to have known how to use them. Paul points out to them, in this chapter, how ignorant they were concerning the very gifts which they possessed. They did not know how to put them to proper use in the service of God. The apostle therefore reminds these gift-exalted Corinthians that, only a little while before, they were heathens, carried away by falsehood and superstition, and worshipping dumb idols. They had nothing, therefore, to boast of; and it is probable that, if we also look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug, we shall find no more occasion for boasting than they had.

3. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed:*

I suppose that, in their assemblies, where everybody talked who liked, there were some people who even spoke blasphemy. They professed to be under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet they stood up, and called Jesus accursed. Where there is no rule nor order, there is pretty sure to be something very mischievous before long. Paul gives them to understand that this kind of talk could not go unrebuked.

3. *And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

If a man really knows Jesus as his Lord, and he declares that truth, then you may fully accept it as being in harmony with the teaching of the Spirit of God.

4—7. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

It is given in order that he may himself profit, and also that he may be the means of profiting those who hear him.

8. *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;*

He is prudent,—an experienced man,—fit to lead the young, and the feeble, and those who are less instructed than he himself is.

8. *To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

He has a wide range of practical acquaintance with God's Word; and though he may not be so judicious as the brother who was just mentioned, yet he is a man of knowledge.

9. *To another faith by the same Spirit;*

Paul probably means here some special kind of faith; perhaps, the faith that enabled its possessor to work miracles.

9, 10. *To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits;*

So that he is able to detect the impostors who come even into the nominal Church of Christ. They did come then, and they will continue to come even to the end.

10, 11. *To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Whatever our gifts as a church, or as individuals, may be, they all come from the selfsame Spirit. This should tend to promote unity amongst us. Let us all trace whatever gift we have to the hand that gave it, and to the Spirit that wrought it; let us feel that we are so many pipes connected with one fountain; and, therefore, as all the good that we convey comes from the one source, let us give all the honour and glory of it to the Spirit of God from whom it comes.

12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

That is to say, Christ visible,—the Church of Christ. We are members of his mystical body. He is the Head; but all who are quickened by the Spirit of God are one with him.

13, 14. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.*

By the way in which some people act, you might almost imagine that the body was one member, and that the one member was a tongue; but it is not so. God never intended that, in the assembly, all should speak. Let those speak to whom he has given the power to speak. He does not lay all burdens upon one back; let each man bear the personal burden which God has placed upon his back.

15. *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Where are you, dear child of God, who are in the position of the foot?

Have you been comparing yourself with some eminent Christian, who did much in his Master's service; and have you sorrowfully asked, "Why cannot I do what he did? I am only a poor foot, always touching the ground, often limping, and frequently needing to be washed." Well, suppose you could be made into a hand, it might be a gain to you in some respects, but it might be a loss to the rest of the body. It would certainly be a loss to any of you if your feet were to be turned into hands, for you have need of feet; and the Church, which is here called by the name of Christ, needs its feet as much as it needs its hands.

The mercy is that, even if you have, in your anxiety,—perhaps I ought to say, in your unbelief,—been saying, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body," it does not matter what you have said, for that does not alter the fact. "Is it therefore not of the body?" Of course, it is of the body still, whatever it may say.

16. *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Oh, by no means! The ear has its proper purpose to fulfil; it is designed for a special service in the body, which no other member can render. We must never compare ourselves among ourselves, and wish to be somebody else. You are bad enough as you are, dear friend, but you would probably be much worse if you were somebody else. You may think that you are a very poor ear, but you would decidedly make a much worse eye. Even if your ear is dull of hearing, it can, at any rate, hear better than it can see. It can do its own work better than it could do the work of any other member of the body; and so can you as a member of Christ's mystical body.

17, 18. *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

That is the best rule for each part of our body: "as it hath pleased him." Could any of you suggest a better place for your eyes than where they are? We have read the old heathen fable of a giant who had one eye in the middle of his forehead; and whenever I have seen his portrait sketched by fancy, I have felt at once that it was no improvement upon the human face. No, the eye is best where it is; so is the ear, and so is the mouth. They are all best just where they are. So are you, my brother or my sister, best where you are, if you are in the place where God evidently meant you to be.

19. *And if they were all one member, where were the body?*

There would be no body at all.

20, 21. *But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee:*

You know how very quick the hand always is to go up to the eye when it is in danger. You do not have to wait to tell it what to do; but, in an instant, the hand is up, for there is a fellow-feeling between the members of the same body. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee." And the hand never feels that it may leave the eye to take care of itself; it is ready at once to protect it.

21—23. *Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

They are covered and concealed; and so we take more trouble with them than we do with other parts of our body.

24. *For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:*

Here is a lesson for us with regard to church-fellowship,—always to take most notice of those who are the least noticeable, and to be most gentle with those who require the most tenderness. You know that there are some of our fellow-members who are not all we should like them to be. We believe that they are children of God; but they are, somehow or other, "cut on the cross." They are crotchety, and weak in many ways. Now, we should try, as far as ever we can, to adapt ourselves to them. If you have ever had the gout very badly, you know that, if a person walks across the room too heavily, you feel it. Do you, therefore, say to your father, when he is thus laid aside, "You cannot expect me to take notice of such a thing as that"? Nor would you be so cruel as to say to anybody else, "If he has a gouty foot, I cannot help it, and I shall tread on it every now and then." No; you are not so brutal as that. So, if there be a member of the body that is more tender than the rest, and especially if that tenderness is the result of disease, let us try to minister to it as far as ever we possibly can. Let us give "more abundant honour to that part which lacked."

25. *That there should be no schism in the body;*

That is, no division, no rent in the body.

25, 26. *But that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

I am afraid that this second half of the verse refers to a duty which is more neglected than is the other. It is an easier thing to suffer with those that suffer than it is to rejoice with those that rejoice; and I will tell you why it is so; because, in giving compassion to those that suffer, you have some sense of dignity. Condescension is often a sort of pride; but when a brother is better off than you are,—when he has more talent than you have,—when he is more successful than you are,—for you to go and rejoice with him, and be as glad as if it were all your own gladness,—ay, to enter into his joy, and say, "God be thanked, my brother, for thy prosperity! I would increase it if I could, for I feel that I am a partner with you;"—ah! this needs great grace. So, may God give us more grace continually, and deliver us from everything like envy, which is of Satan, and yet is all too common even among professing Christians.

27—31. *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*

Chapter xiii. Verses 1—3. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

God grant us grace, then, that we may abound in this most excellent grace of a true Christian life, which is infinitely more essential than the highest gifts or the most remarkable talents that God himself can bestow upon us!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

INTERROGATION AND EXCLAMATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 13th, 1879.

"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me."—Jeremiah iii. 19.

MEN think very lightly of sin unless it brings them under the eye of the law of the land. They smile at it, as though it were a trifle; but God thinks not as they do. He calls sin by very black names; in this chapter, from which our text is taken, the Lord uses very strong terms in describing sin; and he knows what sin is. He is a better judge of it than we are, so he does not regard it as a trifle, but he calls it "adultery", which among men is regarded as one of the grossest of wrongs, and the foulest of crimes. Oh, if some here, who think themselves righteous, could only see themselves, not as their fellow-creatures see them, but as God sees them, the sight would appal them!

Then, because man thinks so little of sin, he also thinks very little of the grace of God. To him, it seems a very simple matter to remove human guilt. Let God just rub it out, and leave a clean sheet. But God, who knows what sin really is, makes a very different estimate of the difficulties in the way of mercy; and, accordingly, in our text we find him asking the idolatrous nation, "How shall I put thee among the children?" The Omniscient, the Omnipotent, is enquiring, "How can such a thing as this be done?" The Lord adopts the language of wonder, and speaks after the manner of men, as the best method by which he can communicate to our mind his own conception of the difficulty of saving a sinner. He wants to save him,—longs to save him,—yearns to put him among his children; but so many difficulties arise that he says, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

I am going to speak of my text in two ways. You have, perhaps, noticed that our translators regarded the first clause of this verse as a question, and they therefore put a note of interrogation after

the word "nations." "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" But the Hebrew bears another sense, and some later scholars assert that the second meaning is the true one; namely, that there ought to be here a note of exclamation or of admiration, as if God himself delighted to think of all the wonders his grace was about to work: "How will I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations!" The same meaning really underlies each of these two renderings, and we may get at the true sense of the passage by considering both of them. But, please understand that my object is not so much to expound this text as to bring unrenewed hearts into harmony with it. I long, I pray, I agonize, that God may put among his children many of you who have never been numbered with them before.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF INTERROGATION; and, in that sense, it divides itself into two parts—a difficult question: "How shall I put thee among the children?"—and the divine answer: "I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me."

First comes *the difficult question:* "How shall I put thee among the children?"

The Lord seems to say, "How shall *I* do it? This man has lived in total neglect of me; I was not in all his thoughts; or if he did think of me at all, it was only to say unto me, 'Be thou far from me; I do not want to be brought near to thee.' How shall I put him among the children? He neglected my statutes and my testimonies, and would have none of them. I called him, but he refused to come unto me. I warned him, but he despised my warnings. How shall *I*, whom he has thus treated with neglect, put him among the children? Nay, he has not merely forgotten me, and neglected me, but he has chosen other lovers. He has found some other object for his life's ambition, and spent his strength in seeking everything but that which is for my glory. Let him go to his idol gods, and find refuge amongst them in the day of his trouble. Let him call upon the objects of his ambition to administer comfort to him. If he has sought gold, let gold console him. If he has gone into the pleasures of sin, let the pleasures of sin yield him sweetness in the retrospect if they can. But why should *I* interfere with him? He has destroyed himself; he has pulled the house down upon his own head; and all the while, when I stood by offering to bless him, he refused me, and rejected me, and turned against me. Why then should *I* be called in now? Why should *I* be summoned to the rescue of one who is his own destroyer, and who has deliberately rejected me?"

Let that solemn enquiry go home to the hearts of all whom it concerns. Some of you know that, all these thirty, forty, or fifty years, or even longer, you have been living without God. Now that you are in trouble, you are beginning to think about him. But suppose he were to say, "Go ye to your former companions, and see what they will do for you. Now that you have spent all,

and there is a mighty famine in the land, go to the citizens of that country, and join yourself to them; go to the swine-trough, and fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat." Ah! the mercy is, that the Lord does not talk like that; yet still the difficulty of the task is suggested by the form of his question, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

The difficulty arises, next, because of the character of the person to whom he refers: "How shall I put *thee* among the children?" "Thou hast been a wilful sinner. Thou hast not sinned, as some have done, through ignorance; thou didst know better. From thine early childhood, thou hast been taught the right way, but thou hast neglected it; thou hast deliberately chosen the path of evil. Thou wast not taken unawares, like a bird in a snare; but thou hast gone after sin with thine eyes open. Thou hast been foolish enough to follow after thine own lusts, and to drink down iniquity as the thirsty ox drinketh water. Thou hast been a wilful sinner,—a sinner against a mother's tears and a father's exhortations,—a sinner against a conscience that would be tender against thy will,—a sinner against many a dream by night and many a throb of heart by day. 'How shall I put *thee* among the children,' when thou hast been set on mischief, and hast made thy neck like an iron sinew, and hast kicked against the goads that would have guided thee aright?"

Especially may the Lord put this question concerning some who, in addition to being wilful sinners, have been open sinners. "O thief, how can I put *thee* among the children? O drunkard, in thy beastliness of excess, how shall I put thee among the children? O unchaste, unclean haunter of the filthiness of night,—thou who hast deceived and seduced others, and defiled thyself also,—how shall I put thee among the children?" Does not the question seem to come with peculiar power to any, who may be now present, who have upon their conscience, this very hour, the guilt of sins we dare not mention in the public assembly, and who, as they sit in these seats, would not greatly wonder if we were deliberately to point them out, and say what they have done? Yet it is even with you, and such as you, that God determines to work marvels of mercy, although he rightly raises the question, "How shall I put you among the children?"

After all, if we have not gone into open sin, as others have done, there is not much difference between one sinner and another, for we have all sinned, and, having sinned, we stand condemned by the sentence of God's holy law. See how God's question appears to thee now. "Thou art a condemned criminal: 'How shall I put thee among the children?' Thou art one against whom the sentence of death is already recorded, and thou art only spared by a reprieve which the mediation of my Son brings to thee when he cries, 'Let him alone this year also.' Shall I have criminals in my family? Shall I take the condemned out of the cell, and say, 'These shall be my sons and daughters.' Can it be so?" Oh, yes! tell it the wide world over; it is so, and it shall be so again to-night, by God's grace. But, still, it seems even to strike the Lord himself

as being a difficult thing to do, for he says, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

The question suggests the difficulties that must arise in the case of some who have denied the very existence of God, ridiculed the gospel, made jests of the wounds of Christ, and blasphemed his holy name, invoking his vengeance, and daring to defy him to his face. Some have persecuted the Lord's people, as Saul of Tarsus did, and that is a great and aggravating sin in his sight. They have, as it were, thrust their fingers into the very eye of God, "for thus saith the Lord of hosts, He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." It does seem to be a serious question as to how sinners such as these can be put among the children; yet God is constantly working this miracle of mercy. Therefore, publish ye the glory of his grace; tell what his arm has done, and can do again, and will do even to-night; but, still, while ye publish the glad tidings, stand astonished that he should put such guilty ones among his children.

Now just turn the kaleidoscope a little, and get the same thought under another aspect. Think of the position which he proposes to give to this character,—to put thee, great sinner, "*among the children.*" What will the world say? "What! Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted the saints,—has he become a child of God? What! is the blasphemer saying, 'Abba, Father'? Is he sitting at the feet of Jesus? Then, surely, we may say, 'Let us sin, that grace may abound.'" It may be that some ribald tongues will draw blasphemous inferences from the very mercy of God; shall it, then, be exercised?

And, if it be, what will "the children" themselves say? When they see such an one as thou art coming in amongst them, will they not be likely to say, with the prodigal's elder brother, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." The Lord knows that there are some of his children who still talk in that way; and he might, therefore, very well say to the gross sinner, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

It was not so very long ago that I heard a minister say that he did not believe in the revival, which was then being experienced, because so many outrageous sinners had professed to be saved; he thought it was due to regular attendants at places of worship that, if anybody was saved, they should be the first,—a precious piece of abominable legalism! But the Lord does not act in that fashion. He makes them a people who were not a people, and calls her beloved who was not beloved. He takes the very lowest of the low, and exalts them; he lifts the beggar from the dunghill, and sets him among princes, even the princes of his people, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Yet, still, he is obliged to ask the question, "'How shall I put thee among the children?' How will the children like it?" Blessed be God, the children at the Taber-

nacle will like it very much. They will say, "The more, the merrier. Oh, that the Lord would bring in amongst us some of the outcasts of Israel, and some of the worst sinners of the Gentiles! How we would rejoice to welcome them!" Still, only fancy what would happen if you were to propose to take into your family some of the very vilest characters possible. I am afraid that lady-like daughter of yours would object to such a brother; and I am not certain that that most respectable, gentlemanly son of yours would care to receive such a sister; but God takes into his family such persons as we should never think of receiving into ours.

Think of another individual to whom the Lord has to say, "How shall I put thee among the children?" Who is he? Where is he? He used to be among the children; at least, in name, for he was enrolled with them. He used to sit among them with considerable delight, and he was highly esteemed among them; but he went aside to drink from the drunkard's bowl, or he was led astray by some Delilah, and his locks, like Samson's, have been shorn. I think I hear the Lord say to him, "How shall I put you back again among my children? You went from the communion cup to the cup of devils. You rose from your knees to go deliberately into vice. You knew your duty, but you did it not. You denied your Saviour, as Peter did; even if you did not betray him, as Judas did." We do not wonder that God speaks thus, yet we rejoice that, in this very chapter, we have this gracious invitation, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Happy will they be who respond, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

There are others concerning whom the Lord might appropriately ask this difficult question; they are the grace-resisting sinners. Years ago, they were "almost persuaded." They almost yielded to Christ, yet they never fully surrendered themselves to him. They were, for a time, burdened with a sense of guilt; they seemed to be, for a while, earnest in the pursuit of righteousness; but, somehow, the root of the matter was not in them; and whatever was good in them withered away; and, now, it would take a very sharp knife to cut them to the quick. Do not some of you recollect when you used to sit in these galleries, and tremble as you listened to the Word? Yet, now, though I should speak to you as straight as words could enable me, and pour out my very soul so as to make the gospel of God's grace a living message to you, it would only glide past your ear, and utterly fail to reach your heart. Now the Lord seems to say, after so many warnings rejected, after such violence done to the man's own conscience, and to all the better instincts of his nature, "Let him alone; how can I put him among the children?" Could you wonder if he did say so?

I will speak to just one other individual, and then I will turn to another part of the subject. How old art thou, my friend? I see, by thy white hairs, that thou art past the usual age of men. He leans heavily upon his staff; he cannot live much longer. What has been that man's manner of life? Alas! it has been a life spent in neglect of God, and in the pursuit of sin of one kind or

another. He has passed his threescore years and ten, he is going on towards eighty,—perhaps he is past even that. What is to become of him? He has given his best days to the devil, may he not as well give him the rest? He made his choice of masters long ago, and he has served Satan even until now; so let him take his wages, terrible as they are. Shall God be put off with the scrag end of his life? Shall all the prime, and pith, and marrow of his manhood be spent in opposition to God, and then, just at the last, shall this man be received, and be put among the children? Ay, that he shall, if the Lord, by his grace, brings him to the feet of Jesus, no matter how old he may be, nor how sinful he may have been. And we will give him the right hand of holy fellowship as we see the hoary sinner made into a babe in grace; and the end of that man shall not be like his beginning, but he shall find mercy at the hand of our God, whose love surpasses all thought, and outshines all the imaginations of our hearts.

I think I have thus shown you that, in many cases, the question in our text is really a very difficult one: "How shall I put thee among the children?"

But I must not omit to remind you of *the divine answer to it.* If you will read the whole of our text, you will see that there are two "*I saids*" in it: "I said, How shall I put thee among the children? . . . I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." If God had left us to answer this difficult question, it never would have had a reply; but he has himself answered it in the best possible way.

What does the Lord propose to do? He proposes, first of all, to bring in one of his "shalls"—"Thou *shalt* call me." But has God power over human hearts, to decide what they shall do? Is not man a free agent? Yes, he is; else he would not be responsible for his actions. Yet, without at all infringing the freedom of man, God can exercise power over human minds. He is omnipotent in the world of mind as in the world of matter; and, as he said to the dark world, "Let there be light, and there was light," so can he say to dark minds, "Let light come," and light will come. And, often, in the inscrutable sovereignty of his grace, he speaks to those of whom it seemed impossible to imagine that they would ever be amongst his children; and he gives them an altogether new bias, so that they seek after that which, aforetime, they had abhorred, and, not knowing why or wherefore, they turn and retrace their steps to the very thing from which in the past they had fled. Oh, I do pray that the Lord may say to someone here to-night, "Thou shalt." If he does but say it, you will sweetly melt under the beams of his love, you will gently dissolve as the icebergs do in the warm Gulf Stream, your opposition to him shall exist no longer, and you will gladly yield yourself up wholly to him.

Observe that the way the Lord will effect the great change is this, he will give us a new spirit: "Thou shalt call me, My Father." Now, it is by the reception of the Spirit of adoption that we are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father;" so, if the Lord, in his great mercy, shall give to any one of you a new heart and a right spirit, then his

own divine Spirit shall come upon you, and dwell in you. The change that will be wrought in you will be so great that you will not be what you were before, and there shall no longer be the question of difficulty, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

With the new spirit, comes the new cry. The man used to say, "There is no God;" but now hear what he says, "My Father." If he admitted God's existence, he used to say that he did not care anything about God; but listen to him now as he says, "My Father." He said that he did not need God, that he could do very well without him; but now he cries, "My Father." He said that he was happiest when he thought least of God; but now he cries, "My Father, my Father, my Father; let me come to thee, my Father. I am undone until I find thee, O my Father!" He said he had no association with God, and did not want to have any; but now he says, "My Father, my Father." He said he could look up to the starry vault at night, and yet not think of God; but now every star seems to twinkle the great Father's name, and he himself cries, "My Father, manifest thyself to me. Come, pour thy love into my soul, for my heart says, 'I will arise, and go unto my Father.'" Oh, yes! now there is no need to ask the question, "How shall I put thee among the children?" for, as soon as ever God teaches a man to cry, with all his heart, "My Father," why, he is among the children. There was never yet the cry in the soul, "My Father," that the Fatherhood of the great God did not respond to; but he said, "My child, my child," and he fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and blessed him. Now I see how he puts us among the children.

There is also a "shalt not" which is worthy of notice: "Thou shalt call me, My Father; and *shalt not depart from me.*" This reminds us of the grace that not only brings us nigh to God, but that also keeps us there. Possibly, someone is saying, "Well, I call God 'Father' now, but perhaps I may lose him, and forget him, and go away from him." No, if he has brought thee to himself, thou shalt never go away from him any more; there is no fear of that happening.

> "Whom once he loves he never leaves,
> But loves them to the end."

The grace, which he gives us, is in us as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life.

Now you see how sweet it is to be a child of God, and to be among the others of his children, because, although a servant may be dismissed, you cannot be sent away. The servant may go, but the son abideth always. "There are your wages, Mary; and I give you a month's notice that I shall not require your services after that time." Ah! but I cannot say that to my boys, whatever they may do. Your father could not say that to you, could he? No, no; your relationship is not a matter of wages, and therefore it is not a matter of temporary abiding in the house. Once you are God's child, you cannot be unchilded for ever. Once brought, by his great love, to sit at his table, you are no longer like a guest

at an inn, coming and going, but you are a child who has taken up eternal lodgings in the heart of his great Father.

All things are also yours in prospect, and the day shall come when you shall possess such things as eye hath never seen, nor ear heard of. You may be poor now; but, in a very short time, you will be rich beyond the miser's wildest dream of wealth. You may be cast down now; but, within a few months or years, you will be as happy as the angels are, and be with them for ever. You may be obscure and unknown now; but if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have to endure only another prick or two of the pin of affliction, and then you will go to be with God where there are pleasures for evermore. Everything is yours in reversion, and you shall have it when you come of age. You are only a child at present, but you will enter upon your majority in due season; and when you become a man, then you shall be fit to be a partaker of all those blessings that your Heavenly Father has provided for you.

I wish I could talk about these blessed truths as I should like to. If I could get rid of my tongue and my lips, and let my soul speak without the intervention of these organs of clay that are such dumb cold things, I would try to tell you the grandeur of the superlative love, which takes the child of the devil, and puts him among the children of God,—that takes the servant of sin, the companion of the swine, the man degraded below the level of the brute, and yet lifts him up, and makes him to sit among the children of the eternal God, and to be made like unto them. May you all know what it is by happy personal experience!

II. Now I must close my sermon by just asking you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF EXCLAMATION. I have already tried to bring out that meaning,—God himself saying, as if with intense satisfaction, talking to himself, congratulating himself, depicting to himself the bliss of his own benevolence when the object of his mercy is achieved, "How I will put thee among the children!"

In order to bring out this great truth, think of the parable of the prodigal son, and try, if you can, to realize the great change in his condition. There is the Father saying, "My dear, dear son, starved in the far-off country, and defiled among the swine, thou shalt come back to me; and let me once but see thee coming back, and how swiftly I will run to meet thee! Oh, how I will fall on thy neck! How I will kiss those lips that penitently say, 'I am not worthy to be called thy son!' I will stop that utterance with many a kiss repeated again and again. How I will press thee to my bosom, my son, my long-lost son, my son that was dead, and is alive again! How will I bring thee to thy mother's house, and to the chamber of her that bare thee! How I will conduct thee within my gates, and say, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.' How gloriously will I array thee among the children! Thou shalt have the best my house can afford."

The Father seems to see it all before it is actually done, and he thinks, "How princely my poor boy will look when the best robe, bespangled with jewels, shall hide his nakedness! How I will put

him among the children! He shall have a ring such as I give to my choicest favourites. 'Put shoes upon his feet.' My boy shall be no longer a bare-footed beggar. Then bring out the fatted calf, and kill it, and hold high holiday. Ring the bells of heaven; pour forth your sweetest minstrelsy, and let this be the key-note of it all, 'My son, that was dead, is alive again; he was lost, but now he is found.' How gloriously will I put thee among the children!"

Of whom speaks my Master this? Soul, dost thou feel thyself guilty? Does thy heart repent of thy sin? Art thou willing to be reconciled to God? Then he speaks all this of thee,—of thee, poor draff and scum that thou art in thine own estimation. Since thou hast been precious in his sight, thou hast been honourable, and he has loved thee, and given a wondrous price for thee, even the blood of his well-beloved Son. How I wish I could get side by side wth some big sinner here to-night, and tell him what I was myself, and what the grace of God has done for me! I would tell him that my Father in heaven has said, even concerning him, "How gloriously will I put thee among the children! How will I give thee a pleasant land, and a goodly inheritance amongst the sanctified! How will I open thy lips to tell of my mercy, and fire thy heart with zeal to proclaim my goodness!" Does it seem too good to be true? Listen to my own testimony. Had anybody told me, when I was seeking the Lord's face, nearly thirty years ago, that I should be here to-night to tell these thousands of people all that his love has done in putting me among the children, I should not have thought it possible. Then, arise, young man, for the Lord can do the like for thee. Look thou to Jesus, for the fountain opened has not yet been closed, nor shall it be till the last of his elect is washed whiter than snow; and that time has not yet arrived. Believe and live. All difficulties are removed by the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and amongst the children of God thou shalt stand, and he shall delight in all that his mighty love, his superlative grace, has done for thee.

"Cast thy guilty soul on him,
Find him mighty to redeem;
At his feet thy burden lay;
Look thy doubts and cares away;
Now by faith the Son embrace;
Plead his promise, trust his grace."

If I had to tell you of a hard master,—if I had to stand here, like Moses, to tell of the thunders of the law, I must do it, though it would go hard with me to deliver such a message; but when I have only to tell you that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,—that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin,—when I have to quote his words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," and tell you that, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts,—"let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;"—when I have

such a gospel as this to proclaim to you, oh, I think you should accept it; nay, I am sure you should accept it. I have not to impose hard terms upon you; I do not come with threats of war and destruction. Mercy fills the throne, and wrath stands silent by. Oh, come and accept the mercy of your God! Some of you will do so, I know. The Lord shall lead you to do it by his gracious Spirit, and to his name shall be the praise for ever. Amen and Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HOSEA XIV.

According to the heading of this chapter, we have here "an exhortation to repentance," and "a promise of God's blessing."

Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the* LORD *thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

Fallen into sorrow, fallen into shame, fallen into spiritual poverty, fallen into weakness of faith, fallen almost to destruction, though thou art Israel, and God loves thee, yet "thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;" and the only possible way in which thou canst obtain restoration, is to "return unto the Lord thy God." Seek once again thy Father's face; cry, with the prodigal, "I will arise, and go to my Father." "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." Thou mayest do so, for he bids thee come back to him. Thou shouldst do so, for it was ill of thee to wander from him; so end thy wandering, and return unto him.

"Return unto the Lord thy God." He is "thy God" still. He denies not the sacred band which binds thee to himself. Though thou hast forsaken him, yet still he bids thee think of him, not as a stranger, but as thy God. O child of God, are you just now very heavy in heart because of your backsliding? Is the lamp of spirituality burning very low? Do you feel as if you had got into a state of spiritual barrenness? Then return—return at once—unto the Lord your God, for your sad condition is due to your iniquity.

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the* LORD *: say unto him,—*

He puts the words into our mouths; for he knows that, sometimes, we feel as if we cannot give proper expression to our repentance. We feel it, but we cannot utter it; so he puts the very form of the confession into his children's mouths: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him,"—

2. *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

Sin has had the mastery over you; therefore, ask to have it taken away by pardon, and by the cleansing which shall deliver you from the influence and power of it. Do not ask the Lord merely to take away some of your sin, but say to him, "'Take away all iniquity.' Especially, if I have indulged some darling sin that has been my ruin, take that away."

"Take away all iniquity, and receive us." "Thou canst not receive us with our sins upon us. Wilt thou press us to thy bosom while we are black and foul with iniquity? No, that cannot be; so, first take away all our sin, and then receive us. Receive us again into favour with thee, into a conscious sense of thy love. Receive us when we come to thee in prayer. Receive us when we come to the communion table. Receive us as thou didst at the first, as thy sons and daughters."

"Receive us graciously." "We cannot hope to be received on any other footing but that of thy free and abounding grace; for even if thou dost forgive and cleanse us, we shall be sinners still, and shall still need thy grace and mercy."

"Receive us graciously; so will we render." "When thou hast put away our sin, and received us, then we will begin to serve thee; and we will bring to thee, not the calves of the legal sacrifice, for a sense of thy love will make us feel that thou delightest not in burnt offering; but we will render unto thee the calves of our lips,—our testimony to thy faithfulness,—our declaration of thy truth,—our prayer,—our praise."

3. *Asshur shall not save us;—*

When a man trusts to his God, he gets away from all other trust. Confidence in God is the death of all other confidences: "Asshur shall not save us."

3. *We will not ride upon horses:*

Which, somehow or other, were always the Israelites' fear and trust. They always looked upon horsemen as the most powerful friends or foes in the day of battle; but now they feel that all creatures shall be given up, and they will cling to God alone: "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses."

3. *Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

What a sweet reason this is for confidence in God, namely, that he cares for those who have nobody else to care for them,—that he becomes the Helper of those who have no other helper, and the Guardian of those who are left friendless in the world! O my soul, art thou not just such an one,—friendless, helpless, hopeless, orphaned? Fly, then, to that God in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, and thou, too, shalt find mercy.

Now let us listen to the voice of God:—

4. *I will heal their backsliding,—*

He can do it; he will do it, he evidently rejoices to do it. He soliloquizes with himself, as though it were a very pleasant thought to him: "I will heal their backsliding,"—

4. *I will love them freely:*

"Though there is nothing lovely in them, though they deserve my wrath,—though, according to their own confession, they have gone after false gods, I will love them freely."

4. *For mine anger is turned away from him.*

"I have fully forgiven them, and I have caused my great wrath to pass away from them." Now, dear child of God, you to whom I spoke just now, who have fallen into a dull, dead, dreary sort of state, are you not encouraged to return unto the Lord when he thus declares that he will heal your backsliding, and love you freely? You shall have your joy-days back again; you shall have your old love restored; you shall have your old delight renewed; you shall again dance before the Lord for very joy of spirit.

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel:*

"When they come back to me, I will refresh them,—softly, sweetly, efficaciously, abundantly, mysteriously, even as the dew refreshes the thirsty earth."

5. *He shall grow as the lily,—*

Your souls shall suddenly spring up. As the daffodil-lily springs up almost in a night, and its golden bells speedily appear, so you, who seem

so dead, shall grow up, adorned with the golden flowers of God's delight in you.

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.*

Fickle as you have been, God's grace will make you stable. You shall have as firm a roothold as a cedar has, and be as fixed as Libanus himself.

6. *His branches shall spread,*

You shall begin to have influence upon others, and cast a shadow over them for their good.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,*

His soul, bedewed by grace divine, shall be beautiful as the olive tree, which has an almost indescribable loveliness all its own.

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.*

There shall be a gracious flavour about you, who are now so sapless and dry, when once the Lord returneth to you because you have returned to him.

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return;—*

Your children, your friends, all those who live in your house, shall be the better for your repentance and return to God. They try you now, but when you have left off trying God, they will leave off trying you. Among a man's own children, there are often those who remind him of his own sin against God. Do you wonder that Jacob had so much trial with his sons when you remember what kind of man he was? Are you surprised that David's latter days were so full of trouble when you recollect his great sin? Ah! but if the Lord restores, and revives, and refreshes you, your household also shall be blessed: "They that dwell under his shadow shall return;"—

7. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*

Your household shall have such a blessedness about them that observers shall say of you and yours, "They are a seed that the Lord hath blest." The Lord has a most gracious way of making families to be very choice and select, and full of comfort and peace, when those families walk in his fear; but when there is sin in the head of the household, there comes disorder in the family, the departure of the divine blessing, and all goes awry.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?*

"I have had enough of them. They have cost me sorrow enough; they have plagued me enough. I will put them away, for I must have my God, and I cannot have him and idols too."

8. *I have heard him and observed him:*

God hears the cry of the penitent, and observes what is going on in his heart.

8, 9. *I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the* LORD *are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

The Lord give us wisdom, by his Holy Spirit, to understand and know these things, and to put our understanding to practical account by returning unto him, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—230, 568, 233.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MISTAKEN NOTIONS ABOUT REPENTANCE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 20th, 1879.

"Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 31.

WE noticed, in our reading, in what a kingly style the Lord speaks all through this chapter. He does not say "*if*" or "*but*"; but he says, "*I will,*" and "*you shall;*" and this teaches us that God is omnipotent even in the regions of free agency. It would be preposterous to say that man is not a free agent. There are some who, in order to glorify the grace of God, have sought to deny the free agency of man;—I do not mean that they have done it in so many words; but, practically, the effect of their language has been to deny it. But man is perfectly free, and God violates not the human will; yet, I cannot explain to you how it is, he is as much able to rule perfectly free agents as he is to control the atoms of inert matter. It is omnipotence which compels yonder starry orbs to obey the laws which God has made, and to travel in their appointed courses; but, to my mind, it is even more marvellous omnipotence which leaves men free agents, and controls not their will, but yet sweetly triumphs over them, and wins for God the accomplishment of his divine purposes.

Will you attempt to exclude God from the realm of mind? Do you dare to think that he has not all power there? Then, your god is not mine; for my God "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" The operations of his grace are attended with such omnipotent energy that he is able to say to men, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Yet, while the Lord speaks thus to them, they are still men,—as much

men as they were before; and, indeed, their manhood is more perfect than it was before; yet God wins his way, and does with them according to his own will.

Yet the Lord is pleased, in some cases, to explain to us the processes by which he works. For instance, in the production of the repentance described in this chapter, he tells us that it is the result of his superabundant love. By lavishing his goodness upon undeserving persons, who wilfully rejected his authority and despised his vengeance, he at last brought them to submission. They smarted for their sin, yet they sinned on; and then God dealt with them in another fashion; he blessed them, and pardoned them; he gave them back the mercies he had withdrawn from them; he gave them more, and more, and more, and more, till, by the wondrous power of his grace, he slew their enmity, and caused love to take its place. He conquered their love of sin, and then a hatred of the sin which had grieved their God sprang up in their minds. This is a very blessed process, and in every phase it magnifies the love and goodness of the Lord; so, while we think and speak of it, we bless and praise and magnify the name of the Most High whose love is thus manifested to the unworthy.

That is not, however, quite the subject on which I am going to speak at this time, although it leads up to it. There are many persons, who are truly awakened and anxious about their souls, and who are really seeking to be reconciled to God; but there is a great difficulty in their way. They say that they cannot repent. I am frequently receiving letters of this kind:—"I want to become a Christian. I am anxious to be reconciled to God. I do, I think, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; but my faith is feeble, and I am afraid I am not saved, because I cannot feel that sorrow for sin which I would like to feel. If I could, I would break my heart, and weep for my iniquities; but, alas! I do not find myself to be of an emotional character, and I cannot stir my soul to that intense anguish which I have heard some speak of. May I still hope that faith will save me? May I come, and trust in Jesus Christ, for I do not feel that I have the repentance I ought to feel?" So many are these cases, that I thought I would devote the sermon of this evening to them; and see if, in some way or other, by God's gracious guidance, I may not roll away the stone which has long been in the way of true seekers after Christ.

I shall deal, first, with *some mistaken ideas of what repentance is;* then, with *some mistaken ideas of the place which repentance occupies;* and, lastly, with *some mistaken ideas of the way in which repentance is produced in the heart.*

I. Many persons have MISTAKEN IDEAS OF WHAT REPENTANCE IS.

Some confound it with *morbid self-accusation.* It must have struck you, in reading the autobiographies of certain good men, that, in the description of their lives before conversion, they put the colouring on very heavily. I do not think they are always wise in so doing; but it must not be forgotten that, very often, they write their own biographies in after years when, through having seen much of God's love, they get a clearer apprehension of what

sin really is. They do not write their life history when its various events occur; and I do not suppose that, at the time, they regarded themselves as being such sinners as they afterwards believed themselves to have been.

I advise you, dear friends, to beware of making yourselves out to be worse than you really are. There are some persons who could not do so if they tried; but there are others who, having been, by divine providence, brought up in the ways of godliness, have never gone into open sin as some of their fellows have done. They have been sinful enough, God knows, and as they themselves will know when after years shall have shed more light on their character; but let them not try to mimic the expressions of persons of more advanced years. Do not call yourself "the chief of sinners" if you are not; and do not suppose that repentance means the exaggeration of your evil life into something more evil than it really was. It is enough for you to go and confess the truth, and to be sorrowful that you have hitherto forgotten your God,—that your thoughts have been turned away from the true centre,—that you have lived for yourself, and hence have been an enemy of the Most High. Go and confess that to the Lord, but do not bring against yourself a morbid self-accusation which is not true in God's sight.

Again, some think that repentance means *the dread of hell, and a sense of wrath.* Men ought to dread hell; it is a thing to be indeed dreaded, as they know who are enduring its torments. Men ought to fear the wrath of God. It is a very solemn reflection that every unconverted person in the world has the wrath of God abiding upon him, and will have it abiding on him until he escapes to the refuge provided in the atonement of Christ Jesus. But a sense of God's wrath against sin is not repentance. It generally goes with it; it frequently attends it; but repentance is a change of mind with regard to sin,—with regard to everything, indeed; and it is a consciousness that sin is sin,—that you have committed it;—it is a sorrow to you that you have committed it, and a resolve, in God's strength, that you will escape from it;—a holy desire and longing to be rid of sin which has done you so much mischief. In the words of the child's hymn,—

> "Repentance is to leave
> The sins we loved before,
> And show that we in earnest grieve
> By doing so no more."

And there is very much of real repentance which is not accompanied by a dread of hell at all. It is sweetened by a sense of love rather than embittered by a dread of vengeance. Do not, therefore, confuse things that differ.

A very gross mistake indeed is made by some who imagine that *unbelief, despondency, and despair* are repentance. These things are wide as the poles asunder. No doubt there are many, who ultimately come to Christ, who for a time think they are too great sinners to be saved. Do I commend them for thinking so? Far from it; they imagine a lie, and how can it be right for us to

believe that which is untrue? No doubt many, who come to Christ, do for a while despair of ever being saved; but is it necessary that you and I should do so? By no means; for, to despair of being saved, is to give the lie to God's own truth; and that can never be the right thing for anyone to do. God is true, and he has declared that whosoever will trust his Son shall be saved. If I turn round, and say, "I cannot be saved, and I cannot trust Christ," I do, as far as in me lies, pour indignity upon God; I insult him, for I doubt his word; and I distrust his Son, who is worthy of all confidence. That sort of thing cannot be repentance; on the contrary, it is something that needs to be repented of. If you have no such doubts, and no such despair, be glad you have not; for they are not of God, but they are evil. To come, like a little child, and say, "I know that I have done wrong, and I am very sorry for it; and I wish to be set right. I find that Christ can set me right, and I trust him to do it;"—that is the way to repent of sin, and trust the Saviour; and he who does so is accepted of the Father.

Neither let anybody mistake *Satanic temptations* for repentance. It is very true that, when some persons are coming to Christ, Satan is very eager to keep them away; and, therefore, he plays all kinds of tricks in order to turn them aside, or to cast them down, lest they should be saved. But do you think that these Satanic temptations are any part of true repentance? Then, you make me smile; you might as well say that, if a child were coming to his father, and a dog were to howl at him, and try to frighten him away, that the howlings of the dog were a part of the child's coming. By no means; they are a hindrance to him; and, I pray you, never think that the devil's temptations can do you any good. The less of him you have, the better will it be for you; it is better to go seven miles, over hedge and ditch, to miss the devil, than to have one conflict with him; and if you do not have conflicts with Satan in coming to Christ, do not wish for them, or think that they are at all necessary to your being truly a believer in Jesus. Come you to him, and welcome; and if there is nothing in your way, come all the more readily, and cast yourself down at his dear feet, and take the mercy which he freely gives to all who trust him.

Do not let me be misunderstood in another observation that I make, namely, that the repentance which saves the soul—the repentance which is necessary to salvation—is not *a full and complete view of the guilt of sin*. You will understand me when I say that no man living has ever had a full and complete view of the guilt of sin, but that we all see the guilt of sin more as we grow in grace than we do at the first. The value of divine grace grows with a man; as experience strengthens his judgment, and enlightens his heart, his true estimate of the guilt of sin will daily increase. I suppose that the truest repentance is that of a man who is just entering heaven. Therefore, the repentance which saves is not absolutely perfect or fully developed. If there be but this germ of it,—that thou dost sincerely wish to be delivered from sin,—if thou dost sincerely hate the sin which thou didst once love,—thou hast the repentance that saves thee; and though thou wilt hate sin more

by-and-by, and thou wilt be able to avoid it more by-and-by, as thou art more completely sanctified by the Holy Spirit; yet the necessary thing, at the first, by which a soul closes with Christ, is a turning from sin, a loathing of it; and if thou hast that, thou hast true repentance; but not else. Repentance is also a sense of shame for having lived in it, and a longing to avoid it. It is a change of the mind with regard to sin,—a turning of the man right round. That is what it is; and it is wrought in us by the grace of God. Let none therefore mistake what true repentance is, and seek for what they need not wish to have.

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT THE PLACE WHICH REPENTANCE OCCUPIES.

I do not suppose I am addressing very many who have fallen into the popular notion that repentance is *the procuring cause of the grace of God;* yet it is a very common notion. "Well, I do my best," says one, "and God is just, so I have no doubt I shall have my due reward." But you commit sin, do you not? "Yes," he replies, "but then I am sorry for it, and I try to get right again as soon as I can." According to that notion, repentance is a sort of compensation for sin. If it is really so, the next time I am in that gentleman's debt, I shall not think of paying him; I shall simply tell him I am sorry I am in his debt, and, of course, he will wipe out the score. He demurs to that, and says it would be unjust; yet that is the style in which he acts towards his God. God forbid that we should ever think that repentance can, of itself, put away any sin!

The same evil, however, comes up under other forms, and there are some who think that repentance is *a preparation for grace.* They hope they shall receive the grace of God if they repent. But, my dear friend, if you repent, that very fact is a proof that you already have one of the results of grace, and that God has looked upon you in love. For you to say, "I must repent first," reminds me of the supposed Romish miracle of Saint Denis, who, having his head cut off, picked it up in his hands, and walked away with it, I forget how many miles. A French wit said, when he heard the legend, "Ah! it was easy enough for him to walk so many miles after he had taken the first step; that was the only one that had any difficulty about it. If he could manage that, he could manage all the rest." In like manner, if repentance be the first step towards God, and the sinner can take that by himself, well, then, he can take all the rest, and he need not trouble himself about the grace of God, because it is not needed. The man can do the whole work of salvation to the very end if he can by himself take the first step. Ah! my dear friend, but repentance is not a preparation for grace, it is the first result of grace working within the soul. One of the earliest products of a divine visitation is the humbling of the heart on account of sin, and this is the beginning of true repentance.

There are others who think that repentance is *a qualification for faith in Christ.* Such a person says, "If I have repented of sin, I can then believe in Jesus. If I am conscious of my guilt, I may

then come, and cast myself upon Christ." My dear friend, I know that you never will cast yourself upon Christ until you are conscious of sin, for men do not usually eat till they feel hungry, and they do not clothe themselves till they realize that they are naked. It is well for you to have a sense of your iniquity, but, at the same time, it is no qualification for believing in Jesus. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The only qualification a physician seeks in his patient is that he is sick. The qualification for pardon from Christ is guilt. The qualification for imparting his fulness is your emptiness; that is all; and if you feel yourself to be so empty that you do not even feel your emptiness,—if you feel yourself to be so hard that you do not even think you feel your hardness,—well, then, you are just the kind of man that Jesus Christ came to save. If there is no good thing in you whatsoever;—nay, if there be no repentance in you;—yet still is it true that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and still he sends his servants to you with this plain gospel command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"Still," says one, "repentance must be *the ground of our belief*. Do I not believe that I am saved because I repent?" Stop! There is a muddle there. What is the ground of my trusting Christ? That is what I mean by believing. I will tell you. My only ground for trusting Christ is this,—that I am told, by God's Word, that he can save sinners, and I believe he can; and that then I am commanded to trust him to save me, and I do it. My warrant for believing is God's Word,—not my sense of sin, or anything in me. How, then, do I know that I am saved? I do know, as I stand before you, that I am a saved man. Why do I know that? Because it is written, "He that believeth on him is not condemned," and I do believe, trust, rely on Jesus Christ. Sometimes, I feel as if I were not saved; but my feelings must go overboard if they come into conflict with the plain declaration of God's Word: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The ground of a man's belief that he is saved, is not that he repents, but that he has trusted Jesus Christ, who is able to save him, and that God has declared that whosoever trusts Christ is saved.

"Then," says one, "there must be repentance and believing." Yes, I know that; and repentance goes well side by side with believing. If I was asked whether a man repented first, or believed first, I should reply, "Which spoke in a wheel moves first when the wheel starts?" When divine life is given to a man, these two things are sure to come,—repentance and faith; but if anyone should say, "He must repent first before he believes," I should contest that point very strongly; and if, on the other hand, a man should say, "There is such a thing as a belief which is not attended with repentance which will save the soul," I would contest that point with equal ardour. No, they come together as the first marks of the new birth in the soul. This is the practical point which concerns you; no metaphysics of theology need perplex your mind; what you have to do with is God's command, and that command is, as I just reminded you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved." And if thou dost that, thou hast repentance in the germ; and that repentance will grow and increase; but thou must take heed not to put thy repentings into the place of Christ. I will say this,—bold and naked as the saying may seem to be,—if you put your repentings into the place of Christ, you make an antichrist of them; and if you trust for salvation to your repentance, or even to your faith, you might as well trust to your sins. Nothing is to be trusted to but the finished work of Jesus Christ upon Calvary's bloody tree; and no feelings, no emotion, no believing, no conversion even, must ever be put into the place of that one eternal Rock of refuge,—the blood and merit of Jesus Christ. Fly thou there, poor soul! Whatever thou art, or art not, fly thou there; cast thy guilty self on Christ, and rest there, for there alone canst thou find salvation. Learn this lesson,—not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent;—not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to him that he may give you a broken heart;—not to come to him because you are fit to come, but to come to him because you are unfit to come. Your fitness is your unfitness; your qualification is your want of qualification. You are to be nothing, in fact, and to come to Christ as nothing; and when you so come, then will repentance come.

What, then, is the true place of repentance? It is this: I trust Christ, just as I am, to forgive me. I have God's assurance that I am forgiven, seeing that I am trusting Christ. What, then, do I feel? I am forgiven; covered is my transgression; my iniquities are all washed away. O my Saviour, how I love thee! And the next thought is, O my sins, how I hate you!" This feeling naturally grows out of a sense of divine love. Am I pardoned? Am I fully forgiven? Can I never be cast into hell? Am I indeed a child of God? Then, how could I ever have lived as I once did? Can I ever play the fool after that fashion again? No, my Lord, thy love shall bind me fast, and nail me to the cross of Christ, my Saviour; henceforth, I am dead to sin; I cannot live any longer therein, because thou hast saved me! We do not repent in order to be saved, but we repent because we are saved. We do not loathe sin, and therefore hope to be saved; but, because we are saved, we therefore loathe sin, and turn altogether from it. May the Lord bless these words to the correction of some of the mistakes which are so frequently made!

III. Now I come, in the last place, to notice SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS AS TO THE WAY IN WHICH REPENTANCE IS PRODUCED IN THE HEART.

"I cannot repent," says one; "I want to make myself repent, but I cannot." Now, of all things in the world, that is one of the most absurd and impossible. Shut yourself up in a room, sit down on a chair, and try to make yourself repent. You could not do it. Did a man ever try to make himself love a woman? No, but he was smitten at the first glimpse of her face; he could not help himself, and ere he was aware the deed was done. And it is just the same with repentance; it comes as a secondary thing. Through meditation and thinking over certain other things, the sacred passion

of repentance comes upon us; but it is not a direct operation of the mind, that can be performed at will, any more than faith is. If you were to find something in the newspaper that you doubted, and you were to sit down, and say, "I will make myself believe it," you could not do it. You would have to examine the matter, consult the proper authorities, and see about the dates and facts, and then your believing would come of itself through those considerations; but you could not, as a distinct and direct act, compel your mind to believe in anything of the kind, much less to believe in Christ. So it is in relation to our regret on account of sin; it comes from other considerations.

There are some who have said, "Well, if we are to repent of sin, we ought to attend some exciting meetings; when everybody all around us gets warm, and begins to cry, perhaps we also shall be melted to tears." I have no doubt that a great many have been melted, and have felt a good deal as the result of crowded meetings; but I very greatly question whether the repentance which comes of God is created by excitement. Indeed, I know it is not; it has to come from more substantial causes and influences than ever can be brought to bear by the mere eloquence of man, or the excitement of a multitude of people gathered together. "But, suppose," says another friend, "I were to sit down, and meditate upon the wrath of God, upon the judgment day, and upon the woes of hell, would not that produce repentance?" Yes, perhaps it would; such meditations might have a very salutary influence upon you, and might tend to awaken in your mind serious thoughtfulness, but I am not certain that they would lead you to repentance. I will try to show you how God brings sinners to repentance, for that will help you who are now seeking it. How, then, does the Lord lead men to repentance?

According to this chapter, the first thing he does is, *to change their nature:* "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." This is regeneration,—the change of nature. The heart of unimpressible stone, naturally hard, is removed; and a sensitive, impressible heart is given,—a fleshy heart, so that the man can feel. If you really want to repent, this is the message I have to deliver to you, "Ye must be born again." If I wish to grow olives, I must have an olive tree. "Can the fig tree bear olive berries?" "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" The thorn must be turned into a vine, and the thistle into a fig tree, if we are to get from them grapes and figs; and, therefore, again I say unto you that, if you would bring forth repentance, you must be born again.

"Oh!" says one, "there is not much comfort in such teaching as that, for it drives us away from all hope." That is exactly what I want to do with you. I want to convince you of the simple fact that there is no hope for you in and of yourselves; but that you must come, and find all your hope, your regeneration, and everything else, in Jesus Christ, from whom alone it comes to all who trust him.

But how does God work repentance in the soul when he has

renewed the nature? As we read the chapter, we noticed that *he gave great mercy to the undeserving*. So, then, if you wish to obtain repentance, the way to secure it, by the grace of God, is through a consideration of the goodness of God to you. Think, dear friends, of the many years that God has spared you; and of the almost miraculous escapes which some of you have had. Think of how, all that while, you were provoking him, and going on from ill to ill and from one sin to another; yet, in his longsuffering, he bore with you, and thus was leading you to repentance. Think of the fact that, at this moment, you are "not in torment, not in hell," but you are where the gospel of God's grace is freely preached to you, and where pardon may be bestowed upon you,—where God is still dressed in the white robes of mercy, and has not yet come in the scarlet robes of judgment. Oh, the goodness of God, to have spared a tree that has cumbered the ground so long,—to have spared a rebel who has provoked him so grievously! Such thoughts as these have a tendency to lead men to say, "I will sin no longer; I will love sin no longer, because God has been so merciful to me."

But let me tell you that, when God works repentance in the heart, he does more than this. He not only gives the man blessings, *he gives him forgiveness also;* and when the man sees that he is forgiven, he says "What! forgiven? Then, how can I live any longer in sin? I hate my sin." The Lord says to him, "Thou art my child; I will feed thee, clothe thee, and train thee for my house above." "Thy child?" he exclaims; "a child of God after all that I have done?" And he begins to take vengeance on his sins, and to drive them out of his heart; for how can we, who are the children of God, endure the presence of sin?

That forgiven man *begins to pray*. I can distinctly recollect one of the first answers I ever had to prayer; and when I woke to the consciousness that God did really hear and answer my supplication, I tell you that I loathed sin. I could not bear to do anything to grieve a God who really listened to my cry. Then, when I was delivered out of great trouble, and was enriched with very great mercy, I felt, "How could I ever have been what I have been? How could I have lived as I have lived?" And when I found out that God would continue to visit me with his lovingkindness as long as ever I lived, and that I should be his favoured child for ever and ever, then did I hate sin more than I had ever done before, and I was grieved and cried out unto the Lord by reason of the bondage I had been under, and I longed to be clean rid of every trace of sin. I do not know that I felt, at such times, any dread of hell. It was quite the reverse; but I hated sin, because of God's love to me. That is the way in which God brings repentance into the hearts of his children. He loves them so much, and does so much for them, that they cannot continue any longer in sin.

Now, dear seeking soul, do you see the tack to go upon? Your business is to believe in Christ Jesus just as you are, and to trust him to save you; and then to believe what the Word of God says concerning those who trust in Jesus, namely, that they are saved, forgiven, loved of God, and at peace with him. Do you believe

that? As you believe it, you will feel, "My heart melts under a sense of this superlative love. Now I can and do repent of sin,—the very thing which seemed impossible to me before."

If I had time, I would like to show you that *every blessing of the covenant of grace leads us to repentance.* Take the doctrine of election. "What!" says the man, "have I been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world? Then, how could I live in sin?" Take the doctrine of redemption. "What!" says he, "am I redeemed from among men,—bought with the precious blood of Christ? Then, how can I go and live as others live?" Take the doctrine of final perseverance. "What!" says he, "does the grace of God give me the guarantee that I shall hold out to the end? Then, God forbid that I should at any time turn aside from the paths of integrity!"

You may take the gospel ordinances, as well as its doctrines, and you will find that they all lead you to repentance. Have you been to the communion table, sitting and feasting with Christ, and have you not even there said, "Alas! that I should ever have had in my hand the cup of devils, and have been, as once I was, a companion of those who hated the name of Christ"? I am sure, beloved, that, if you have been with the Lord in private prayer, and he has lifted you up to his bosom, and revealed to you his secret thoughts of love, you have smitten upon your breast, and said, "Such love as his to such a worm as I am is altogether too great. Such love to one who was so provokingly, so aggravatingly sinful,—oh, whence is this to me? O my Lord, I do love thee! I could wash thy feet with my tears; and, henceforth, I do resolve to devote myself to holiness, and to that alone." No, beloved, there is nothing that God gives us that leads us to sin, but the gifts and grace of God all lead us to repentance; so that is the way by which repentance is fashioned in the soul.

So this is my last word upon the subject. If any of you are still under bondage in this matter, and say that you cannot repent,—if you really wish to have a tender and deep sense of sin,—do not sit down, and study your sin,—do not sit down, and study the penalty of it; but begin to think of the supreme love of God in Christ Jesus, the greatness of that mercy which is as high above you as the heavens are above the earth. Believe that he can save you. Do more than that; trust yourself with Christ that he may save you. You are saved the moment you do that. Do not believe it because I say it, but because God declares it over and over again. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Believe in Jesus; cling to him, and to him alone, and repentance must come into your soul. Old Donne, the famous preacher, used to say, "Hang on him that did hang on the tree;" and that is what I will say to you, "Hang on him that did hang on the tree." And, then, until he falls, you will never fall. If Christ is first, and last, and midst, and everything to you, he will give you repentance, he will give you the heart of flesh, he will give

you a sensitive conscience, he will give you the pure and cleansed life; but you must not think to bring any of these to put them into his place, but—again I say it,—just hang on him that did hang on the tree.

The Lord bless you, and help you so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 16—38.

Verses 16—19. *Moreover the word of the* LORD *came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.*

When God comes forth to deal with men according to their deserts, there will always be times of dire distress. The land of Israel was made into a wilderness; the habitations of men were burnt by fire, the inhabitants fell by the sword, or they were carried away captive, and untold miseries became the lot of God's revolting people.

20. *And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the* LORD, *and are gone forth out of his land.*

For the heathen did not remember the sin of Israel; they only saw that they had been cast out of their land by their God, so they blamed Jehovah, and not his guilty people. Thus, God's holy name was doubly profaned.

21. *But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.*

If the Lord could see no ground of mercy in them, yet, so full of mercy is he, that he would find a reason for exercising pity for his own name's sake. If lovingkindness cannot come to them by any other means, then it shall come for God's name's sake.

22—24. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord* GOD, *I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the* LORD, *saith the Lord* GOD, *when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.*

He says that he will do this for his holy name's sake. If the heathen profaned that name because they saw Israel scattered, they should be made to eat their own words when God gathered Israel again to their own land.

25, 26. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

What grand language this is! How different it is from the stern commands of the law! The law says, "Make your hearts clean; put away the evil of your doings;" but the gospel covenant of grace says, "A new heart also will I give you, and I will cleanse you from all your iniquities."

27—30. *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.*

What splendour of love is this to a people who, mind you, had done nothing whatever to deserve it,—who were just as undeserving as in the day when the Lord smote them, and scattered them among the heathen! For no reason whatever but his own free grace, and for the glory of his holy name, would God do these extraordinary deeds of love. What a wondrous God he is! Rightly do we sing,—

"Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

31, 32. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord* GOD, *be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*

There was nothing for them to boast of in all the mercies they received. No merit of their own had brought them back the corn and oil; it was all of God's infinite sovereign grace because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. How royally he talks—like such a King as he is—the Sovereign Lord of all!

33—35. *Thus saith the Lord* GOD; *In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.*

As much as they noticed before the chastising hand of God, so much shall even the heathen be compelled to perceive the great goodness of God in restoring the land to all its former glory.

36, 37. *Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the* LORD *build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the* LORD *have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord* GOD; *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;—*

The blessing shall come, but not without prayer for it,—not without a hopeful expectancy of it,—not without a faithful belief in it: "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;"—

37, 38. *I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts;*

Like the multitudes of lambs that were brought up to Jerusalem at the time of the passover, such should be the number of the chosen people once again.

38. *So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the* LORD.

The result of all this wondrous mercy was to be, that they were to be ashamed of their former sins, and loathe their past iniquities, and so know the Lord as to turn from their evil ways, and live unto him.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—561, 581, 580.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LOST THROUGH ONE; SAVED THROUGH ONE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, April 24th, 1879.

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification."—Romans v. 16.

My one and only desire, at this time, is to help those who are sincerely seeking salvation, that they may find it, and find it speedily. Ignorance often hinders sinners from coming to Christ. I know that it did so in my own case. I have often thought that, if I had understood the plan of salvation more clearly, I should have accepted Christ sooner than I did; and I feel very little doubt that there are many other anxious enquirers who are a long time looking for what is close to them all the while. They are like Hagar in the wilderness, dying of thirst while a well of water is near their feet. They are asking the way to Zion because they are ignorant of the road.

Even the reading of the Scriptures will sometimes not suffice for the enlightenment of such troubled souls, for they are in the condition of the Ethiopian eunuch, who, in reply to Philip's question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" It needs, sometimes, only just a few words to cast light upon the passage which is not understood, and then the eye sees it, the understanding perceives it, the heart accepts it, and the captive soul is set at liberty. Pray, you who love the Lord, and are rejoicing in free justification through Christ Jesus,—pray that the Lord may direct the sin-smitten where to look. Here is Christ lifted up, as the brazen serpent was set upon a pole in the wilderness; but they look to the right or to the left, above or below, anywhere except to the point where we direct them. Divine Spirit, give them sight, and direct that sight to the Saviour, even while we are speaking about him!

I am not going to enter into any theological subtleties concerning the imputation of the sin of Adam, or even into any questions

about the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. I shall try to speak very simply upon the two points to which the apostle here refers, and to show you that, as we are lost through one, so we are saved through one.

It pleased God, of old, to commence the human race with a single pair of individuals. One man, Adam, was the representative of the entire race of mankind, for God determined to deal with men in the mass through one chosen representative. In that one man, they stood in perfection for a while. How long or how short Adam's obedience was, we cannot tell. There are some who think that he stood scarcely for a day. The psalmist says, "Man being in honour abideth not." But, at all events, after a time he was tempted, and he fell. He broke the one commandment which was given him as a test,—by no means a hard one,—by no means savouring of severity or austerity; but he broke it wilfully, and, straightway, our representative was found to be faulty. He was expelled from paradise, and upon all his seed, seeing that they were all represented in him, there came judgment unto condemnation. The result was that, as men grew up, and advanced in years, they died; and from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to this present day, it has been the rule that men should die; so that the sin of Adam has prevailed over the race, and left to it a life of toil and sorrow, by-and-by to end in death. This might cause us the deepest gloom if it were all that we had to tell; but, thank God, there is another and a brighter side to the story.

There are some who cavil at the justice of this representative arrangement, but there are many others who believe in it, and rejoice over it. I always contend that it is a happy circumstance for us that we did fall and were condemned in the bulk in our representative; because, had we, each one of us, been individually put upon the like probation, we should, to a certainty, all of us have fallen. We are none of us better than our first parent was; and if the experiment had been repeated in the case of each one of us, it would have ended in the same sorrowful way. But then it must have ended finally and fatally;—at least, so we believe; for when the angels fell, sinning individually, there was no hope of restoration for them. Whether infinite wisdom might not have devised a plan, consistent with justice, by which the angels who had apostatized might have been restored, is more than we can tell. We know that the Lord did not devise any such plan. They individually sinned, and, sinning, fell past all hope of recovery; and now they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." No gospel was ever preached to them,—no atonement was ever made for them; but they were left to abide in their sinful condition, willingly to persevere in perpetual rebellion against the Most High.

But we, happily, had fallen through a representative; and, therefore, we could be restored by another Representative; so, in the infinite wisdom and mercy of God, there came into the world the second Adam,—man, really man, though much more than man, for he was also God, and he offered an atonement for the offence com-

mitted against the law,—such an atonement that whosoever believeth in him hath his sins for ever put away. Thus, we rise in the same manner as we fell, only in a very different Person. We fell in the first Adam; we rise in the second Adam; we fell, in the first Adam, through no fault of our own; we rise, in the second Adam, through no merit of our own; it is of the free grace of God that we are received back into his favour.

There is much that might be said upon this matter; but I only intend, as I have already said, to touch the points mentioned here. So, first, *let us contemplate the contrast which the apostle here sets before us;* and when we have done so, *let us adore the manner of the divine mercy.*

I. First, LET US CONTEMPLATE THE CONTRAST DEPICTED IN THE TEXT. Paul tells us that, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." But it is not so with the free gift; one transgression ruined us, but the free gift takes away many transgressions. *It was one offence of one man which brought ruin upon our race.* Adam offended once, and by that one offence he brought us all into disfavour with God, and the race became a judged and condemned race, toiling and ultimately dying. Now, if one offence had such power that the whole race was ruined by it, will you not, with all your hearts, adore the wondrous atoning work of Christ, by which many offences are removed by the free gift of pardon which he has come into the world to bring? When, through Jesus Christ, we obtain the remission of our sins, all the mischief of Adam's fall is undone. As to any guilt which has fallen upon the race, all the members of that race are set free from guilt as soon as they believe in Jesus Christ.

Adam brought a great mortgage upon our estate, which it would not have been possible for any of us to discharge; but, to every believer, that first and heaviest mortgage is entirely removed, and the estate is free. In addition to this, however, we have, each one of us, sinned. The estate was encumbered at first, but we have encumbered it much more; like an heir, who comes into an encumbered estate, yet straightway beginneth to burden it with debts more and more, multiplying them until the mortgage is a crushing load too grievous to be borne. But whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ may have this for his consolation,—that "the free gift is of many offences unto justification." Do not try to count your sins, your arithmetic will fail you if you attempt such a task as that; but if it will benefit you to go over the transgressions of your life from your youth up even until now, do so with repentant heart; but when you have added them up as best you can, and tried to conceive the total sum of your iniquities, then write at the bottom, 'But the free gift is of many offences unto justification;"—"of *many* offences,"—however many they may be;—though they should outnumber the sands on the seashore, or the drops that make up the ocean, yet the free gift of divine pardon sweeps them all away.

Think a little of the many forms that sin has taken in this world,—from that crimson sin which startles even the ungodly man himself, such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, drunkenness, blasphemy, and the like, to the lighter shades of sin, as we are apt

to think them, though it may be that, in God's sight, there is as much evil in these faults as in those more glaring crimes. I will not attempt to catalogue our transgressions. I should have to use a roll like that of the prophet which was written within and without, and it would have to be so long that I know not where space could be found to put it away. Our sins and iniquities are innumerable. They have gone over our heads like the waves of the sea. Personally and individually, there is not one person, who looks at his own character and heart aright, who will not see that his life has teemed and swarmed with sin; yet the free gift of divine love puts all those sins away the moment we believe in Jesus. The Romish Church divides sins into two sorts, sins mortal and sins venial; but, to me, it is of no consequence how the sins of a believer are described, seeing that Christ has taken them as a whole, and cast them into the depths of the sea. You may, if you will, classify sins under various heads,—sins of thought, sins of word, sins of deed;—sins against the first table, which concerns God; or sins against the second table, which concerns man;—sins of ignorance, and sins of wilfulness; the sins of youth, the sins of middle life, and the sins of old age; but though you pile them together, mountain upon mountain, as in the old fable,—Pelion upon Ossa;—yet, still, Christ taketh them all away from all who believe on him. "The free gift is of many offences unto justification."

This thought grows to startling dimensions when you remember that all the sins of each man must be multiplied by the number of men who, being believers in Christ, find in him justification from their many offences. Oh, what a seething mass of sin would lie upon this poor world, in the sight of the living God, if there were none but his own people upon it, had not Christ swept it away by his infinite atonement! One cannot think, without horror, of his own sins alone; but when we think of the sin of all the saints who have ever lived upon the earth, and the sin of all the blood-bought sinners who are yet to be born, and who shall many of them, perhaps, live to old age,—what a heap and mass of sin it is! "But the free gift is of many offences unto justification," and covers the whole vast mass.

As I want practically to use each separate thought, let me say,—Soul, if thou art willing to be saved in Christ,—if thou art willing to be saved in this way in the second Adam as thou art assuredly lost in the first Adam,—let not the number of thy sins confound thee, so as to prevent thee from having hope of eternal salvation in Christ Jesus. Let thy sins so confound thee as to drive thee to despair if thou hast any hope in thyself or in thine own merits, in thine own feelings, or doings, or weepings, or in anything that is thine; but if salvation is to be had through the blood of Another, through the merits of Another, and thou art willing to have it so, then, though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool; and though they be more in number than the hairs of thy head, they shall, in one single instant, be taken from thee never to return. Yes, in a moment shall they disappear, and shall never be mentioned against thee any more for ever. Is not this good news? You do not want

me to embellish it with fine words; you only need to believe it, and to say to yourself, "Yes, there is a possibility of the blotting out of all my trangressions." Say that, thou who hast gone in for sin like a very leviathan who needs the great deep to swim in. If thou hast oceans of iniquity, it mattereth not, in the sight of God, though thou hadst oceans more, for "the free gift" of pardon and eternal life "is of many offences unto justification." One sin has slain us, but Christ's mercy bringeth us the death of all our multitudes of sins.

The second point in our text is that *the one transgression of Adam led to judgment:* "for the judgment was by one." That first sin of our first parent did not go long unjudged. Sometimes, among the sons of men, there is a long period between the commission of a crime and the assizes at which the prisoner is tried; but, in Adam's day, God had short sessions. Ere the sun had gone down, the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and he called to Adam, and said unto him, "Where are thou?" Then Adam stood before his Maker in a different relationship from that which he had ever occupied before,—as an offender to be judged; and though there was no great white throne for him to see, yet there was a pure throne of justice there, and his trangression received the condemnation with which God had threatened him; and he went forth from the garden of Eden to toil, and, by-and-by, to return to the dust whence he was taken,—respited, but still condemned,—condemned to drag his chain about, and at last to die. One transgression, then, brought judgment upon Adam, and will bring judgment upon all who are not protected and preserved by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. When the time arrives for the sitting of the Judge of all upon the great white throne, men and angels will be present to watch the distribution of his impartial justice. Then will come the sentence of condemnation against all sin; but the mercy for all who are trusting in Christ is that "the free gift is of many offences unto justification." That free gift has anticipated the judgment, for it says to the believer, "Thou art already condemned in the person of thy Substitute. The verdict in thy case has been given; thy judgment is past already."

Let me repeat what I have often said, for I find that it is still needed. I frequently read in books, or hear ministers say, that we are in a state of probation; but nothing can be more false. We are not in any sense in a state of probation; we are condemned already. The time of probation was over in Adam's day; and, now, we are criminals under sentence of condemnation, or else we have been absolved. God's free gift of pardon implies that we admit our condemnation, that the sentence has already rung in our ears, and that then God has said to each one of us who has trusted to the blood and merit of his Son, "I absolve thee; thy transgressions are all put away for his sake."

Have you, dear friend, ever gone through that experience? Did you ever stand before the judgment-seat of your own spirit? Did you ever judge yourself, that you might not be condemned with the world? Did you ever feel that you were condemned, and then did

you, with trembling faith, accept that free pardon which puts you past the judgment? For, when a man has committed an offence against the law of the land, and the Queen gives him a free pardon for it, he is not afraid that the police will break into his house, and take him off to further trial. No, it is tantamount to this,—that he has had his trial, and passed it, for he has received a free pardon from the highest authority in the country; and, beloved, no child of God needs to stand in fear of the judgment. He has been judged; he has been condemned; what is more, he has been punished; for, in the person of his glorious Representative, the guilt of his trangression has been laid upon his Substitute, and expiation has been made for it so that it is for ever put away, according to that wondrous word of the prophet, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." How can he be amenable to justice who has already acknowledged his transgression, and has received pardon? Does not the divine forgiveness clear him? Ay, that it does; such is the pardon, stamped and sealed with the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, which the Judge of all the earth has given to us who have believed on his Son.

The one offence, then, brought man to judgment; but the glorious free gift of grace takes away from us even the fear of that tremendous day when Christ shall come in his glory; for, in that day, who shall lay anything to our charge? That man need not fear to go to the last great assize who feels that he can walk into the court and say, "Who is he that can even bring a charge against me?" and who feels, in addition, that if the devils in hell were base enough to fabricate a charge, yet, "it is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" Since Christ hath died, and risen again, and now sitteth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us, what judgment have we to fear? Glory be to God for that free gift!

Note, also,—I have already partly anticipated this point,—that *the one transgression not only led to judgment, but it led to condemnation.* Adam must have felt that when he picked up the first dead bird, and when he saw the deer lie bleeding beneath the paw of the lion. He must have realized it still more painfully when he gazed upon the pale face of Abel, smitten to death by his own brother; ay, and when Adam had to pause in his work because he felt weary, or that he might wipe the sweat from his brow, he felt more and more that he was under condemnation. When he could no longer walk through Eden's garden, and converse with God,—when he saw the fiery sword uplifted at the gate of what had once been his own *pleasaunce* and place of delight, and when he knew that he could never again enter there, he understood what it was to be under condemnation.

That condemnation, dear friends, is a thing to tremble at; but our text tells us that "the free gift is of many offences unto justification." What a glorious word that word "justification" is! It means the opposite of "condemnation." When God comes, in infinite mercy, and gives a free pardon to a guilty soul, through

Christ, he makes that man to be the same as if he were perfectly just. Instead of standing there condemned, he is absolved;—nay, more than that,—he is justified, made just, and to be treated now as though he never had sinned at all, but had always been a just and righteous man. Oh, wondrous change of condemnation into justification! Just as thou hast trembled when God has condemned thee, so do thou with as much force rejoice when God justifies thee; for, if he says thou art just, then just thou art,—so just that, as I have already said, none shall ever dare to lay anything to thy charge.

This, too, is a matter of present possession. As soon as we believe in Jesus, we are justified,—made righteous,—"made the righteousness of God in him." It is a very wonderful thing; it is, perhaps, the grandest doctrine that could possibly be proclaimed; but it is true. Hark, thee, friend; dost thou understand that, just as, in Adam, thou wast condemned, and so came under the sentence of death, so, if thou believest in Jesus Christ, thou shalt be cleansed altogether from thy many offences, and God will look upon thee as perfectly just in Christ Jesus. Thou shalt, by faith, have peace with God, and there shall be a reason for that peace, for everything which made God angry with thee shall have been put away, and thou shalt sing,—

> "I will praise thee every day!
> Now thine anger's turned away;
> Comfortable thoughts arise
> From the bleeding sacrifice;"—

and that may be done now, at this very moment. It need not take thee a day, a month, a year; but, in an instant, God can speak the pardoning word, strike his pen through the long list of thy sins, and write thee in his book as 'Righteous," and righteous thou shalt be there and then. Oh, wondrous grace! Shall we ever be able to say sufficient to express our gratitude for it?

Now I want you to notice that *this one offence involved death*, as well as judgment and condemnation; for we find, in the next and succeeding verses, that "death reigned." The apostle puts it very strongly. "By one man's offence death reigned by one;" he sat upon his throne swaying his grim sceptre over the entire race of mankind, and he even claimed, as his victims, babes "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," and their little bodies were laid in the grave. Oh, the awful power which sin had thus to turn the world into one vast cemetery, and to slay the whole human race! But, beloved, when Jesus Christ comes to your soul and mine, he takes away the punishment,—not merely of that one offence of Adam, but of "many offences." Sin brought death into the world, with all its woe, but Christ comes, and takes death away, removing all punishment for sin; so that whosoever believeth in him will, for his sake, never be punished, and cannot be for this best of reasons,—that it is not consistent with divine justice that there should be two punishments for the same offence; and as God accepted Christ as the Substitute for all of us who believe in him, he cannot afterwards punish us for the sin that was laid upon

him. There can never be such injustice as that which would be perpetrated by the Judge of all the earth if he took Christ to stand vicariously to suffer in the believer's stead, and then caused the believer to suffer, too.

"But," someone asks, "will not the believer be afflicted and chastened?" Yes, but that is quite another thing from being punished for his guilt. Not penally, as with the severity of a judge; but lovingly may he be chastened by his Father who takes him into his family. There is a great difference between punishing for an offence and chastening for it. Punishment looks at the guilt of it; but chastening comes from a Father who has already forgiven it, and who chastens with a view to the profit of the child, that he may not offend again. There is and always must be a grave distinction between the rectorial character of God as a judge, and the paternal character of God towards his own people; and you and I, who have received Christ, are dealt with as children, no more to be punished in the penal sense, but as dear children who must be scourged that we may no more offend him.

Do you understand this, poor seeking sinner,—that you need not dread the punishment of your sin if you will but trust in Jesus? You need then have no dread of hell; for, if you believe in Jesus, and so prove that you are one of those who are in Jesus, and that he stood as the Substitute for you, and made atonement for you, there is for you no sword of vengeance, for you there are no flames of hell, for you there is no wrath of God. You are free from condemnation; and, as a natural result, you must be free from punishment.

I will only just mention two or three things on which I meant to have spoken at greater length, and then leave this point. The first is this, that *the one offence brought condemnation immediately.* As soon as ever Adam committed the offence, he underwent the sentence of spiritual death which God had threatened as the result of disobedience. In like manner, the free gift, the instant it is bestowed, brings justification immediately.

> "The moment a sinner believes,
> And trusts in his crucified God,"—

he is as much justified as he ever will be even in heaven. He is clean in God's sight; he is cleared of all guilt by that one act of God's free grace as soon as he believes in Jesus.

Next, *the offence of one was manifested* very speedily. Adam felt ashamed of his nakedness. Very soon, he realized what toil meant, and he saw the signs of death's dominion, for the graves began to multiply. Now, in the same fashion, the free gift soon manifests itself. It does not give us a something merely to dream about, but it gives us a justification which our spiritual senses are able to perceive, for "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." When God puts away our sins, he gives us a manifest joy,—not a thing that is hidden or wrapped up, but a joy that can be seen by all whose eyes are open.

Further, *the one offence operated universally.* All who were represented by Adam have had to feel the consequence of his trans-

gression; and, in like manner, the free gift operates universally upon all who receive it. There was never a sinner yet, who trusted in Christ, who did not receive strength, life, absolution, and justification; neither shall anyone ever trust in Christ, and yet be left to perish.

And *the one offence acted completely and fatally.* It slew the whole race; see how they have died! Ask every hill or valley whether still it doth not hold the relics of the slain. And, in similar but more blessed fashion, the free gift operates effectually and finally. In the first case, God overrides its effects; but, in the second case, he never will do so. He whom God justifies is justified for ever, and so shall he stand, as long as he lives, and throughout eternity, a just man in the sight of God. This just man shall live by his faith; he shall hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger. What a glorious piece of news is this that I have to tell to every soul that feels its need of such a great salvation! Would God that you would all believe it, and trust the Saviour whom I thus proclaim unto you!

II. My time has fled, so I can only tell you very briefly what I meant to have said at greater length upon my second head, which is, LET US ADORE THE MANNER OF DIVINE MERCY.

Let us, first, *thank God that he treats us representatively.* I was pleased with a passage, which I met with in the writings of Dr. Chalmers, where he rejoices that he fell in Adam, that so it became possible for God to raise him up again in the same way that he fell, that is, representatively. Because, my dear brethren, if you and I were standing now in perfect innocence, we should always have to feel that there was a possibility that we might fall; nay, more than that, by this time we should all have fallen, whatever our age or position may be. Even these dear girls and boys would have fallen into some sin or other. It would always be an insecure standing if we had to stand by ourselves upon our own merits. But, now, although we have fallen in Adam, and have been broken to shivers, we who have believed in Jesus have been lifted up again in him who never can or will fall. Do you see him up yonder in glory? Never did the so-called everlasting hills stand upon their solid basis as firmly as he stands at the right hand of God. What power can ever remove him? And he stands there for me,—for you, my brother or sister,—for every soul that believeth on him; and until he falls, you will never fall. You will never perish until he perishes, for you form a part of his mystical body, as the apostle Paul puts it, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." There are some people who think that Christ may lose certain of his members. In fact, according to their representations of the theory of falling from grace, you would think that he was like a lobster, or some other creature that sheds its limbs, and grows new ones. But our Lord Jesus represents himself as a man, and a man will not willingly lose so much as his little finger. If he did, he would be imperfect; and Christ will not lose the humblest, meanest member of his mystical body, for, as the apostle says, that body is his fulness, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Oh, what

a standing it is to be made to stand in Christ! He raised me from the gates of gaping hell, and made my standing more secure than ever it was even before Adam fell, and I fell in him, blessed be his holy name!

The next thing for which we ought to adore the method of God's mercy is, that *it is all a free gift:* "The free gift is of many offences." "The free gift." I like Paul's way of putting those two words together,—"free" and "gift." A gift, of course, is free, so this expression is tautological; but it is blessedly tautological. Someone asked me once, "Why do you say 'free grace'? Of course, if it is grace, it is free." "Oh, well!" I replied, "I do so to make assurance doubly sure." We will always call it, not only grace, but free grace, to make it clear that God gives his grace freely to sinners, —the undeserving and ungodly. He gives it without any condition. If, in one place, he says that he requires repentance, in another place he promises it; if he demands faith at one moment, he bestows it at another. So grace is always God's free gift, and that suits a man who has not a penny in his pocket. I have walked—as I daresay some of you have—by the goldsmiths' and jewellers' shops in the Palais Royal at Paris, and seen the vast amount of wealth that is exhibited there; and many of you have gone along the great streets of our city, and seen perfect mines of wealth displayed, and you have said to yourself, "Ah! I cannot purchase any of these things, because there is a little ticket hanging down below with certain pounds marked on it, and I cannot afford to buy them. It is all I can do to get bread and cheese for those who are at home, so I must leave these luxuries to others." But if I should ever pass by a goldsmith's shop, and see a ticket bearing the words, "Free gift!" I should be willing to take a few things at that price. I am glad that you smile at that expression, because those are my Master's terms. He has treasures worth more than the most glorious jeweller's shop ever contained, and they are all free gifts to all who trust him. I dare not laugh at you, but I shall have to blame and condemn you, if eternal life be God's free gift, and yet you will not say, "I will take it, and have it for ever." You would like to take jewellery for nothing, but you will not accept everlasting life and pardon for nothing by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, we ought specially to adore the love and mercy of God in that *his plan is to save us by Christ Jesus.* To my mind, it makes every blessing all the sweeter because it comes through him; the very glory of our salvation is that we are saved in him, "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." I have sometimes thought, when I have seen a ship beautifully fitted up,—a fast-sailing clipper, —that I would like to go to sea in her, not simply for the sake of the place to which I should be going, but because I should like to be in such a ship, with such company, and under such-and-such a captain. Well, here is Jesus, the great Captain of the glorious ship of salvation; and who does not feel that, while it would be well to go to heaven anyhow, it is best of all to go with him and in him? Oh, to be linked with him,—with God's darling Son,—with the delight of the angels,—with the Father of all the ages,—the

Wonderful,—the Counsellor,—the Mighty God,—the Altogether-lovely,—the Best-beloved of our soul! It makes the sweetness of salvation all the sweeter because it comes to us by Christ Jesus.

The Lord bless you, beloved, and give you to know all this in your own souls, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS V. 6—21.

Verse 6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

This is one of the most surprising sentences on record. If it had not been inspired, there are many who would cavil at it. Indeed, many do cavil at it even now, for it is still currently believed that Christ must have died for the righteous. Yet thus is it written: "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." And this is the commendation of that death, and of the love which suggested it:—

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

For a merely just man, scarcely would anybody die.

7. *Yet peradventure for a good man—*

For a benevolent man—

7, 8. *Some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

It is under that aspect that Christ is to be regarded as dying for the ungodly, dying for sinners. Ungodly man, guilty sinner, is there not hope for you in this blessed truth? Does anyone say, "I shall be lost, for I am ungodly; I must necessarily perish, for I am a sinner"? Your logic is at fault, dear friend. "Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" therefore, the ungodly—sinners—may be saved because of his death, and all who trust him shall be saved.

9. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Did he die for us while we were sinners? Will he not, then, surely keep us now that we are saved? Yes, that he will.

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

What an invincible argument this is for the safety of all true believers in Jesus! Did he die for them, and reconcile them unto his Father by his death, when they were enemies? Then, will he not certainly save them now that they are reconciled, seeing that he ever lives to intercede for them? Will he not save them by his life? Assuredly, he will.

11. *And not only so,—*

We cannot get to the end of these priceless boons. These precious pearls are too numerous even for the apostle to count, although he was a man who knew how to "reckon" up spiritual treasures: "And not only so,"—

11—14. *But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned—*

Personally—

14. *After the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

So that the sin of Adam took effect upon the human race before the law came, and even upon those who had no personal transgression,—unconscious infants, I mean,—causing them to die.

15—17. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence—*

By Adam's one sin,—the sin of one man,—

17, 18. *Death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

That is to say, upon the "all" who are in Christ, as the condemnation came upon the "all" who were in the first Adam. He who believeth not in Jesus has no part in "the free gift unto justification of life;" but he who believeth is a partaker of the glorious justification which comes by Christ.

19, 20. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound."*

It was the practical result of the giving of the law that men became greater sinners than they were before, and it was the design of the law that they should see themselves to be greater sinners than before. The law is the looking-glass in which we see our spots, but it is not the basin in which we wash them away. The law has a provoking power, for such is the perversity of our nature that, no sooner do we hear the command, "You shall not do so-and-so," than at once we want to do it. Our nature is very much like quicklime. Throw cold water upon it, and straightway it generateth heat; acting, as it were, against the nature of that which is cast upon it. So, the more God says to a man, "Thou shalt," the more the man says, "I will not;" and the more God says to him, "Thou shalt not," the more doth the man resolve that he will. "The law entered, that the offence might abound." It reveals the depravity and disobedience of human nature, and lays us low before God as convicted criminals.

20. *But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

Blessed be God for that! Sin may be a river, but grace is an ocean. Sin may be a mountain, but grace is like Noah's flood, which prevailed over the tops of the mountains fifteen cubits upward.

21. *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Do you know, dear friends, by personal experience, all about this of which we have been reading? I know that many of you do. Would God that all did,—that they understood, by a living faith, what it is to be justified, having first understood, by sorrowful experience, what a sense of condemnation the guilty soul must feel. The Lord bring you all to himself, by Jesus Christ! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 547, 738.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

INTERCESSION AND SUPPLICATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 27th, 1879.

"Art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee."—Jeremiah xiv. 22.

THIS is an instance of amazing yet holy boldness. The prophet had received from the Lord the explicit command, "Pray not for this people for their good;" and yet, after expostulation with God, his heart grew so warm with sacred fervour, and his spirit became fired with such a passionate zeal, that he could not help pleading for the sinful nation. He poured out his soul in the vehement prayer, and said to the Lord, "We will wait upon thee." This was, perhaps, disobedience in the outward form; but it was not disobedience as to the inner spirit of the prophet, for the Lord counteth not as disobedience the earnest pleadings and yearnings of the heart of his people. This is a marvellous instance of how, under the most discouraging circumstances, when there appears no prospect whatever of success, men, who are moved of God to pray for their fellows, will cling to his skirts, and still intercede on behalf of those who are altogether unworthy of their supplications.

One of the reasons why Jeremiah resolved that he would still wait upon God was because the case was such an urgent one. The land was chapped through the long drought; the poor beasts were dying of thirst; men and women were pale and pinched with hunger, and there was no one who could deliver them out of their distress. The heavens could not pour down rain of themselves, and the gods of the heathen could not render any help; so Jeremiah says, "Therefore we will wait upon thee. It is our only hope; and though it seems to be a forlorn one, yet, since it is the only one we have, we will cling to it with desperate resolve."

There are two things which appear to me to be strikingly illustrated by our text and its connection; the first is, the beauty of an intercessor, and I want you so to admire it as to *imitate the intercession;* and the second is, the necessity which drives men to

God, and I want you to *feel the necessity which drives you to wait upon the Lord.* May God the Holy Spirit make you to feel it!

I. First, I want you to see the beauty of a true intercessor, and to endeavour, by the power of God's Spirit, to IMITATE THE INTERCESSION.

Jeremiah interceded for the people, but we have not to seek far before we discover the reason why he did it. God, in infinite mercy, gave the weeping prophet to his sinful people in order that they might not be left as sheep without a shepherd, and be quite given over to utter destruction; and wherever you meet with a man, who intercedes with God for his fellow-men, and makes this the main business of his life, you see in him one of the most precious gifts of God's grace to the age in which he lives. *It is God that writes intercession upon men's hearts.* All true prayer comes from him, but especially that least selfish and most Christlike form of prayer called intercession; when the suppliant forgets all about himself, and his own needs, and all his pleadings, his tears, and his arguments are on behalf of others. I repeat that such men are a most precious gift from heaven; and I feel certain that, before the Reformation, there must have been hundreds of godly men and women who were day and night interceding with the Lord, and giving him no rest until he answered their supplications; and Luther and the rest of the Reformers were sent by God in answer to the many prayers which history has never recorded, but which are written in the Lord's book of remembrance. And when Wesley and Whitefield, in more modern times, stirred the smouldering embers of religion in this land, it was because godly people, perhaps poor, obscure men and women in their cottages, reading the Scriptures, saw the sad state of irreligion and indifference into which the nation had fallen, and groaned over it, and spread the case before God. I know not how to estimate the worth of even one man who has power with God in prayer. When John Knox went upstairs to plead for Scotland, it was the greatest event in Scottish history. All things are possible with the man who, like Elias upon Carmel, casts himself down upon the earth, and puts his face between his knees, and cries unto him that heareth prayer, till the heavens, which were like brass, suddenly drop with plenteous showers of rain. There is no power like that of intercession. The secret springs that move the puppets of earth—for kings and princes are often little more than that,—are the prayers of God's believing people. The hidden wheels that start the whole machinery, and that keep it in motion, are the prayers of God's people. Oh, if the Lord makes you an intercessor, my dear brother, even if you cannot speak with men for God, if you know how to speak with God for men, you occupy a position that is second to none. God help you to fill it well!

True intercessors, then, are special gifts from God; and when he raises up men or women for this high service, you will find that *such persons plead with mighty arguments.* You must have noticed, as we read the chapter, that Jeremiah knew well what he was praying about. He had, in his mind's eye, all those nobles of the land who were reduced to such poverty that they sent their children

out to hunt for water. His prophetical eye could even see the hinds in the field leaving their fawns to die, because there was no grass for them to eat, and no water for them to drink. Jeremiah had upon his heart all the agony of the nation, and he prayed as if his were the thirst, and as if he himself were perishing of hunger. He took the burden of the guilty people upon himself, and became their mouthpiece to God, although they did not thank him for pleading for them, but smote him, and despitefully used him. Yet he took all their griefs into his own sympathetic heart, and he pleaded mightily with God while he had all that great burden resting upon his spirit.

I want you to notice how he pleads. First, he pleads God's name. "Lord," saith he, "these people are called Jehovah's people; and though they deserve nothing but condemnation at thy hands, yet, if thou dost not bless them, the heathen will say, 'Jehovah forsakes his people; this is what comes of being the chosen nation;' and so thy great name will be dishonoured in the earth." And then Jeremiah uses a very strong expression,—for using which, I understand, a minister has recently been called to account; and I do not wonder at that, for, if it had not been inspired, it would have been too strong an utterance from the mouth of any man: "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory." That throne of God's glory was the mercy-seat; and if it could be carried away to Babylon, the heathen would rejoice, and the daughters of the uncircumcised would triumph; and thus the throne of God's glory would be disgraced. Jeremiah rightly felt that this was a strong argument, so he urged it in pleading with the Lord, "Do not let thy glory be tarnished, do interpose to prevent such a calamity."

As the strongest argument of all, he pleads the covenant,—and that is always a masterly argument with the Lord. Turn to the 21st verse: "Remember, break not thy covenant with us." God had entered into a covenant with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob, and with David; and though the sin of the people might well be conceived to have made the covenant null and void, and though they certainly did not deserve that he should keep his covenant with them, yet Jeremiah felt emboldened to say, "Break not thy covenant with us." Depend upon it, God is never a covenant-breaking God, and no plea has greater weight with him than "the covenant, the covenant." O brothers and sisters, if God has made us intercessors, let us come with holy boldness to the throne of grace, and let us plead for our nation, and for our age, and for our kinsfolk, that God would bless them; and let this be our chief argument,—for the honour of thy holy name, for the glory of thy throne, and for the sake of the covenant which thou hast made with our great Surety, forsake not those whom thou hast chosen, however undeserving they have proved to be!

Notice next, that, when a man has his heart set upon this blessed work of intercession, *it makes him quick to seize every advantage that he can when he is pleading with God.* Jeremiah argued thus with God, "Lord, thou sayest to me, 'Pray not for this people for their good;' but it is the false prophets who have deceived them, so,

O Lord, pity the poor people. They are misled; the priests have led them astray. They are poor silly sheep, that have followed the shepherds that deceived them; therefore, have pity on them, and spare them." I like that sacred ingenuity on the part of Jeremiah, leading him to catch at such a plea as that, and to urge it before God. That is something like Abraham did when he, too, had a desperate case in hand,—the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is only these great intercessors who can take up such cases as these. There he stands to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah; and mark the holy boldness which he uses before God. "Lord," said he, "peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; peradventure there be forty-and-five righteous there; peradventure there be forty righteous there;" and so on, till he said, "Peradventure there are ten righteous there; wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" That was fine pleading, and God yielded to it, for he would have spared the city for the sake of ten righteous people if they could have been found; and if you know how to plead with God, you will rake up everything which may in any degree tell on the behalf of the people, even as your Master did, for, when he could say nothing else in favour of his murderers, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even their ignorance he turned into some kind of plea, and in his wondrous mercy used it in praying to his Father. May we all learn how to plead for sinners like that!

True intercessors resemble Jeremiah in another respect, *they will not be turned aside from their pleading*. If they meet with rebuffs, and no answer seems to come to their supplications, they plead on still. It is a wondrous sight to see a mother—a true, tender, gracious mother,—pleading with God for her son. She began pleading for him while yet he lay in the cradle, or before that; she cried to God for him when he was learning to walk with tottering footsteps. She followed him with her prayers through the devious ways of his boyhood and youth; and also when he went away from home, and left her to sorrow over him. Parental restraint was gone; even maternal love was rejected, as he roamed over a great part of the world. He has grown into a bronzed man now; his face is tanned with the scorching sun of the equator, and he has come home; but his mother's prayers have followed or accompanied him wherever he has gone. She has persevered in pleading with God for him. True, he has been a Sabbath-breaker, and a swearer, and the very sound of his voice has terrified the dear old soul when she has heard him say hard things against the God of Israel. But you should hear her pray when she is alone. She cannot say, "Lord, save my son, for there is in him some good thing towards thee;" but she cries, "O thou that art mighty to save, I cannot let thee go until thou dost save my poor sinful boy! Hast thou not said 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me'? Lord, I am in sore trouble about my son; I beseech thee to have pity upon him, and save him. Didst thou not listen to the Syrophenician woman when she prayed for her child? Oh, hear me as I pray for mine!" Ah! I cannot put it as pathetically as she does, for there

is a wondrous sacred ingenuity in the true mother's heart that makes her plead with peculiar power for her child even when he has grown to manhood. I hope you know what I mean because this is what you have done. When, under great discouragements, seeing those who are the subjects of your supplication going from bad to worse,—when you see them get hardened, and apparently incorrigible, and invulnerable,—when even the arrows of the Word do not seem to touch them or pierce them,—still persevere in prayer. And I will say what some may think a very strong thing,—even if you should have reason to fear that they have committed the sin which is unto death,—you recollect how John puts it, "I do not say that he shall pray for it;" but he does not say that you are not to do so; therefore, take advantage of the negative, and pray on still. Yes, even until their souls have passed beyond the reach of change, into the unseen world, pursue them with your persistent intercession; and it may be that you shall yet have your heart's desire concerning them, nothwithstanding the fact that, as yet, everything seems to tend in the contrary direction.

Now, dear friends, let me say that, if any of us shall ever learn how to offer such prayer as this,—if we shall ever be able to intercede with God in this manner,—*we shall become imitators of our blessed Lord Jesus himself*, for he was, on earth, pre-eminently, the Intercessor. If you could have seen him coming forth in the morning, to preach the gospel and to heal the sick, you might have noticed how his garments were covered with the dew which had fallen upon him as he had knelt all night in prayer to God. He could often truly say, "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;" for he had spent the whole night upon the lone mountain-side agonizing for the souls of those he loved. That sorrowful lament of his—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;"—was only a flash of the fire that always burnt within his heart. The tears that fell from our Saviour's eyes, as he wept over Jerusalem, dropped from a cloud that always rested on his soul, which was ever filled with a deep sympathetic compassion even for those who had despised and rejected him. And now to-day, my brethren, though he has put off the seamless garment that he wore on earth, and has put on his royal, priestly vesture white as snow, he still wears the golden girdle that John saw in the Revelation. The eyes of faith may see him up there, with no care upon his brow, no spittle upon his cheeks, no scourges for his back; but standing, amidst the harps of angels and the songs of seraphs, before his Father's throne as our great Intercessor still, for he ever liveth to make intercession for us, so that,—

"For all that come to God by him,"—

there may be eternal and certain salvation. Oh, if we could only hear him pray! Of course, there cannot be tears and cries such as became Gethsemane and its humiliation; but there is as much

earnestness in thy cry, O thou blessed Lover of sinners, in the midst of thy glory as there was in the depths of thy shame!

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, learn from your Lord and Saviour how to be mighty in intercession. I give you this blessed work to do, all of you who truly know and love him. As I have said before, you may not all be able to speak to men for God, but you can all speak with God for men. This morning,* I told you how to use one hand for battle by not concealing the words of the Holy One; now here is the way to use the other hand for battle by drawing nigh to God in powerful, prevalent intercession. With these two hands uplifted, this church, like Joshua, shall utterly destroy Amalek, and the sun and moon shall stand still while it is being done; and so long as Moses prays, and Aaron and Hur hold up his hands, the victory must surely come.

II. Now I want your very earnest attention to the second, and, perhaps, the more important portion of my discourse, in which I am going to urge you to FEEL THE NECESSITY WHICH DRIVES YOU TO GOD.

Tried believer, here is a lesson for you. Have you come to a very difficult place? Are you in very sore trouble,—such trouble as you never knew before? Then wait upon the Lord; and if at first he does not answer you, and it seems as if the very gates of heaven are shut against you, still continue to wait upon the Lord. Where else can you go if you turn away from him? You are shut up to this one course, so do not seek any other way out of your difficulty. Take that blasphemous letter of Sennacherib, and spread it before the Lord, as Hezekiah did. Take that bitter grief, and tell it all in his ears. To whom or whither should you go if you should turn from him? Therefore, cling to him, and though he slay you, still trust in him, for you have nobody else to whom you can trust.

But I want, mainly, to speak to the sinner. Perhaps I am addressing some who, by the Holy Spirit's teaching, have become aware of their danger, who therefore are longing to find eternal salvation; but they are afraid they never shall be able to do so. My dear friend, go and wait upon God, and ask him to save you. Present your case before him now, and plead with him to have mercy upon you, and then show that your supplication is genuine by accepting the salvation which he sets before you in Christ Jesus for all who believe in his name.

In order to urge you to wait upon God, I would just say these few things. First, *you must perish unless God shall hear you.* You say that you have prayed to the Lord for a month, and yet you have received no answer. Well, even though that is the case, forsake not the posts of his doors, for there is no other door at which you can knock with any hope of success. Perhaps you say, "I have tried to believe in Jesus, but I cannot." I will not correct your mistake this time, but I will say this: remember, that, if you do not believe in Jesus Christ, there is no one else in whom you can believe in order to be saved, "for there is none other name under heaven given

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* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,471, "Concealing the Words of God."

among men whereby we must be saved." It is Christ, or nothing. It is faith in Christ, or eternal destruction. It is laying hold upon Jesus Christ, or else banishment for ever from the presence of Jehovah's glory. You are brought to this pass, that God must save you, or you are damned for ever; God himself must save you, or you are a lost man. You are shut up to that alternative; so, being shut up to it, say to the Lord, with all your heart, "Therefore will I wait upon thee."

Now, bethink you, what else can you do? If you want to be saved, what can you rely upon but the grace of God in Jesus Christ? *Your past life avails not.* Would you dare to lean upon that broken reed? If you are self-righteous, and reckon yourself to be among the best of mankind, or think that you have done no great wrong, well, then, I do not know that I have any gospel to preach to you, for our Lord Jesus himself said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But if the Lord has been dealing with you by his Holy Spirit, and convincing you of your real condition in his sight, I know that you can perceive such flaws in your past life,—such black sins,—so many of them,—such departures of heart from God,—that you dare no more trust your soul's salvation upon your past action than you would trust yourself over the mouth of a pit swinging by a spider's web. You know better than to do such a thing as that; your past life is so deeply stained with sin that you know you must be washed from it in the precious blood of Jesus, or, otherwise, you must certainly perish.

No, your past life cannot avail for your salvation. And suppose it is suggested that you should trust *your future resolves*, will they save you? If you make a good resolution to-night, as strong as you can possibly make it; will that give you a good ground of hope? No, my dear friends, you know it will not, for you have made very strong resolutions before, and they have all been in vain. You have bound the Samson within you with green withs and new ropes, and I know not what besides, but he has gone outside, and shaken himself, and burst your bonds, and once again you have seen that the strong man has not been overcome. I would give nothing at all for the resolutions that you make in your own strength; they do but increase your sins, because they are simply further specimens of your presumptuous self-confidence. But, my dear friend, you know better, do you not, than to trust to your own resolutions? You really wish to be saved, and you know in your own self that it would only be a mockery if you were to rely upon your own principles, and resolutions, and things of that sort. Why, in yourself, you are as weak as water; have you not proved, by painful experiments again and again, that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwelleth no good thing? Come, then; escape from that refuge of lies, and go to Jesus; wait upon God because you cannot go anywhere else for salvation.

There is no salvation to be obtained from *priests, or forms and ceremonies.* There is a gentleman over there who beckons you to come to him; I know him well; Mr. Priestcraft is his name. He

says that he has power to ease men of their burdens, that by some charmed incantation he can give them absolution. "Hi! presto!" he mutters his formula, and away goes the sin, and the sinner is as white as snow! Oh, yes! I know all about his tricks. I have seen quacks, in the street, selling their medicine to fools; and so, doubtless, there are fools that rely upon the word of quacks in churches, cathedrals, and the like; but "none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Of all the monstrous lies which show the impossibility of human civilization giving common sense, not to say religion, to men, one of the grossest is this lie of pretended priestly power. I charge you, go not to that man; he will take your money, but he will leave you worse off than you were before. There is forgiveness—there is mercy—to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ; but he has not given to any man the power to forgive sins. He says to me, and to all his servants, that we may proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who repent; and we do so, and God will prove that the proclamation is true; but, if sinners look to us, or to priests, or to any mortal men, to find forgiveness in them, they will look in vain. Turn not thither, I implore you; take your eyes off the priests of Rome, and the priests of Baal, look away to Christ alone, and say, "I will wait upon God; I can do no other if I would find salvation." Do as the poor monk did who, after living a life of asceticism, at last came to die. In his cell, he had found a copy of the Scriptures, which he had read to such good purpose that, when the so-called "sacraments" were brought to him, he waved them on one side, and was heard to say, "*Tua vulnera, Jésu! Tua vulnera, Jésu!*"—"Thy wounds, Jesus! Thy wounds, Jesus!" Ah! that is the remedy for human sin, and there is none other. "Therefore we will wait upon thee, O Lord! If there were some other fountain of grace, we might, perhaps, leave thee to go and seek it; but we know that there is none. These priests are of no use to us; we have been to these broken cisterns, and found no water of life there; therefore will we come to thee." O come, men and brethren, and wait thus upon the Lord!

All of you must know that there is no salvation anywhere but in Christ Jesus; but suppose any one of you were to say, "Yes, I know that; neither will I seek salvation anywhere else, but I will brave the matter out. I will never yield to God; I will die game." Ah! but can you do as you say? And if you could, what would be the good of it? There will come a time when that strong frame of yours will be as weak as a rush, and you will talk very differently then. I, too, have known what physical vigour and strength mean, but it is not many weeks ago that I knew what it was to be more trembling than an infant; I seemed to feel as if life were not worth the having so great was my pain of body and heaviness of heart. And such times may come to you big burly men, and you strong-minded women may feel the same; and then you will begin to tremble. As great Cæsar, when the fit was on him, whined like a sick child, so, many of your braggadocios are the very men who tremble most when they come to die. Ah! and when God, the

Judge of all, lays hold of you in the world to come, though your bones were iron and your sinews brass, you will tremble in every joint. Belshazzar only saw the "fingers of a man's hand" that wrote upon the wall of his palace, in letters of fire, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting;" and, though he knew not the meaning of the mystic characters, "the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." There he sat, a shivering coward; but what will he do who sees God's hand, by-and-by, not writing on the wall, but lifted up to deal a blow that shall break him in pieces, as the potter's vessels are broken with a rod of iron?

"Now consider this, ye that forget God," says he, "lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Those are not my words; I dare not say such terrible things on my own account; but they are the warning words of the God of love; and if infinite love speaks like that, you ought to give heed to what is said. There is a weight of emphasis about this message that my voice cannot convey; let me utter it again, with sorrowful and heartfelt earnestness, imploring you never to run the risk of knowing what these dreadful words means: "Consider this, ye that forget God,"—not merely you that blaspheme, but you that forget him, and do not think of him,—"Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God grant that you may not try to brazen it out with him, for you cannot do so, it is impossible!

> "Ye sinners, seek his grace,
> Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
> Fly to the shelter of his cross,
> And find salvation there."

"But," says someone, "I do not believe in any future state." Well, friend, suppose it should happen to be as you wish, have you any advantage over me even then? Suppose that, after all, there should be no future state, I am as well off as you are; if there should be no hell, and no heaven, I am as well off as you are. But if there is a future state, if there is a hell, and there is a heaven, where will you be then? Remember that, to disbelieve is not the same thing as to disprove; and I, for one, feel certain that, as surely as thou livest, there is a future state, and there is a God who will judge thee; and thine unbelief cannot postpone the dread assize. The ostrich hides his head in the sand,—I know the simile is hackneyed, but I can think of no better one just now,—and when he sees not the hunter, he persuades himself that he has escaped from danger; but do you imagine that, because you refuse to believe the Scriptures, that they will be altered to please you? That can never be; but if you will not believe, I suppose you must go on sinning until you find out the truth, and have to cry, in the agony of despair, "Now it is too late." The Lord grant that it may not be so; but, because it is true, therefore wait upon God now, for there is no hope anywhere else.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH XIV.

In some respects, Jeremiah is one of the greatest of the ancient prophets, for he had a most sorrowful task to perform. He had not to deliver a message full of Evangelical comfort, like that of Isaiah; nor had he gorgeous visions of coming kingdoms, as Ezekiel had; but he was the Cassandra of his age. Jeremiah spoke the truth, yet few believed him; his life was spent in sighing over a wicked people who rejected and despised him. He bore a heavy burden upon his heart, and tears continually bedewed his cheeks, so that he was rightly called "the weeping prophet." This chapter gives us an illustration of the style in which he used to pray.

Verse 1. *The word of the* LORD *that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.*

There had been no rain, so the crops had failed, and there was a famine in the land. Jeremiah describes that famine in striking poetic imagery.

2—6. *Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.*

The distress in the land was so great that the city gates, where, in more prosperous times, business transactions took place, and meetings of the people were held, were deserted. There was nothing that could be done while the nation was in such sorrow, and a great cry of agony went up from the capital of the country: "The cry of Jerusalem is gone up."

The highest in the land sent their children to hunt even for a little water to drink; they went to the cisterns where some might have been expected to remain, but they found none: "they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." The covering of the head was the sign of sorrow. You remember how, in the day of his distress, "David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered;" "and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up."

The ground had been reduced, by the drought, to such a state of hardness that it was useless to plough it, for there was no hope of any harvest coming. Even the wild creatures of the field shared the general suffering. The hind, which is reckoned by the Orientals to be the fondest of its young, forsook its fawn, and left it to perish, because there was no food. And the wild asses, which are able to endure thirst better than other creatures can, and are always quick to perceive water if there is any to be found, tried in vain to scent it anywhere. "They snuffed up the wind like dragons,"—like cobras, or serpents, or jackals, as the word may be variously rendered,—but they snuffed in vain; and their eyes became like coals in their head: they "did fail, because there was no grass." What then? Why, the prophet turns to prayer as the only means of obtaining relief.

7. *O* LORD, *though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake:*

"Thou canst not do it because of any merit of ours."

7—9. *For our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O* LORD, *art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.*

Can you not almost hear the good man praying? Notice how he begs the Lord not to be to the land like a mere stranger who passes through it, and cares nothing for it. "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" Then he pleads with the Lord, "Why shouldest thou be as a man strong, but stunned?"—for that is the meaning of the expression he uses,—"Be not thou as a mighty man astounded or stunned, who cannot save us; let it not be thought or said that we have come to such a pass that even thou canst not help us."

This was grand pleading on the prophet's part, and he followed it up by mentioning the close connection that existed between Israel and God: "Yet thou, O Jehovah, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name;" and then pleaded, "leave us not." It was a grand prayer; yet, at first, this was the only answer that Jeremiah received to it:—

10, 11. *Thus saith the* LORD *unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the* LORD *doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the* LORD *unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.*

"You may pray, if you like to do so, for a plague to come upon them as a chastisement for their sins, but do not pray for any blessing for them."

12. *When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.*

After being long provoked, God at last determines that he will punish the rebellious nation, and he seems, as it were, to put Jeremiah on one side, and to say, "I will not hear either you or them. I will listen to no pleading on their behalf; I have had patience with them too long already; now the day of my vengeance has come, and I will show no more mercy to them."

Now note what Jeremiah does even after the Lord has said to him, "Pray not for this people for their good."

13. *Then said I, Ah, Lord* GOD! *behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.*

He says, "Lord, have pity on the people, for they are misled by their prophets. Peradventure, if these false prophets had not thus deceived them, and puffed them up, they would not have been so hardened in their sin." He tried to make some excuse for them, but the Lord would not yield to his pleading.

14, 15. *Then the* LORD *said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the* LORD *concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.*

God says, "Yes, I will deal with the false prophets; it is true that they have misled the people, and I will punish them for their deception; but I will not excuse the people even on that ground."

16. *And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.*

That seems to be a hard answer to Jeremiah's pleading; what is the prophet to do now? God gives him another message to deliver to the people:—

17, 18. *Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.*

So God told Jeremiah that he might go and tell the people that he would weep continually for them. The faithful and sympathetic prophet was to be allowed constantly to shed tears on their behalf, and to feel great distress of soul because everywhere he saw signs of the heavy hand of God resting upon the guilty people. If they went outside the city, the Chaldeans slew them with the sword; and if they stopped inside, they perished by famine; or those that died not were carried away captive into a land that they knew not. What is Jeremiah to do in such a case as this? He is told that he must not pray for the people, and God seems determined to smite them. What can love do when even the gates of prayer are ordered to be closed? Notice how, after he is told that he must not pray, he edges his way up towards the throne of grace, and, at last, he does what he is told not to do. He begins thus:—

19. *Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!*

That is not exactly praying, but it is very like it. Jeremiah is asking the Lord whether he can really have cast off his people.

20. *We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.*

He has advanced a step farther now, to the confession of sin. If that is not really prayer, it always goes with it. It is the background of prayer, so we shall soon have some other touches in the picture.

21. *Do not abhor us for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.*

Now he is getting actually to praying; he cannot help himself. He is told that he must not pray, but he feels that he must; he loves the people so much that he must plead for them.

22. *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.*

O splendid perseverance of importunity,—strong resolve of a forbidden intercession! "Thou, O Lord our God, tellest us not to pray, but we cannot restrain our supplication: 'Therefore we will wait upon thee.'"

God help us all to wait upon him! We are not so discouraged from praying as he was who spoke these words, so there is still more reason why we should say to the Lord, "Therefore we will wait upon thee."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 981, 957.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF DIVINE CHASTENINGS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, in the autumn of 1859.

"When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."—1 Cor. xi. 32.

THERE had been great irregularities, in the Corinthian church, with regard to the Lord's supper. They had made that solemn festival a scene of gluttony. Each person had brought his own provisions with him, and while the rich were feasting on dainties, the poor often had scarcely anything to eat. The apostle Paul tells them that, on that occasion, they did not come together for a feast of carnal things; he says, "In eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

Now, on account of these irregularities, God was pleased to visit the church at Corinth with many sore afflictions. A great many of the members were smitten with sickness, and some were even taken away by death. Little did the church at Corinth understand the reason of this plague, this visitation of God upon their members; but the apostle explains it to them. He says, "For this cause"—note the 30th verse,—"many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." There is a constant judgment going on in the Church of God. If we would judge ourselves, and walk orderly and worthily in God's sight, then we shall not be judged,—the plagues will not come upon us. But when we are judged, what are we to say with regard to that? Is that a proof that God hates his Church, and that he has cast his people away? And especially, too, if any die as the result of their iniquities, is that a proof that they perish eternally? "Oh, no!" says Paul; "they are judged now, in this world,—they are chastened now of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world."

What a great mystery is Providence, even to us who believe in a

future state! We throw down the gauntlet of defiance to the infidel. We declare, and with the best reason on our side, that it is utterly impossible for men to understand how there can be any justice in the dispensations of God in this world, or how there can be any justice in God at all, if there be not a time to come in which the great mysteries of this life shall all be set right. We defy any man, who disbelieves in the immortality of the soul, to account for the fact that the most godly are those who suffer the most, and that, often, those who have the greatest happiness in this world are the men who least deserve it, and are the most wicked. If there be not a future state of rewards and punishments, if the just man shall not reap the full reward of all his sufferings and griefs, and if the wicked shall not receive punishment for all his sins, how can God be just, and how can the Judge of all the earth do right?

There is also another mistake into which we may very readily fall. It is very easy for us to judge of the characters of men by their position in this world, and so to judge in a manner entirely apart from the facts. Some will have it that, if a man be exceedingly prosperous, it stands to reason that he must have been good. "Surely God would not have rewarded him," say they, "unless there had been something worthy about him." This is what is inculcated upon our children. How often does the saving father pat his child upon the head, and, pointing to an alderman, who is growing exceedingly fat with riches, tell his son that he must be a good boy, and then he, too, will become as great. Or, taking him by the house of some exceedingly rich man, how often does the father tell his child that, if he shall be good,—which is, I suppose, but a brief, pithy expression, to signify if he shall be obedient, and keep the laws of God,—then he shall be rich. And so, in fact, it is thought impossible to make a child understand that a man may be rich, and yet wicked,—that he may be happy in this world, and have much of visible blessedness, and yet, after all, be a stranger to God, and be the very reverse of good. We, I trust, in our riper years, are free enough from such a mistake as that.

Ay, friends, we must never judge of men's inward condition by their outward position. A rich man may be gracious, and a poor man may be wicked; and we may turn the truth in the other direction, and declare that many are the poor who have grace within, and many are the rich who are but fattening for God's slaughtering-day at last. It is a well-known fact, which has, doubtless, led to both the errors which I have mentioned,—the error of thinking that God is unrighteous, and also the error of judging men by their outward state,—I say it is doubtless a fact that many of the true children of God are exceedingly troubled in this world, while, full often, the wicked escape. Why is this? Our text explains it. It declares that "we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE CHASTENED OF THE LORD,—THEY ARE MORE CHASTENED THAN ANY OTHER MEN. They are chastened every morning, and they are plagued all the day long. Why is this? God must be right in acting thus, what is his reason? I will give

you a few reasons. First, the righteous are more chastened than other men because their sins are worse than those of others; secondly, they are more chastened than other men, that God may make them an example of his hatred against sin; and then, also, they receive extraordinary chastening because of God's extraordinary value of them, and his determination to wean them from their sins, and cure them of their iniquities.

I say, in the first place, that God chastens his people more than others, and we may find a reason for this in the fact that *their sins are worse than those of other men.* I do not mean that they are outwardly worse,—I will defend the character of the people of God from any such aspersion as that. I do not mean that the people of God are worse sinners than others, judged by the law,—weighed in the scales of the justice which will try all men. It is in another respect that they are worse,—not in the light of the law, but in the light of the gospel.

They are worse, partly because the righteous have more light than other men. In proportion to the light against which we sin, is the greatness of our iniquity. A sin which a Hottentot might commit, and which God would wink at because of his ignorance, he would never pass by in his own children, because his children know better. They have spiritual discernment; they are not so foolish as to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Their conscience has been enlightened; besides, they have the Word of God, and the indwelling of the Spirit; and when they sin, they sin against greater light and knowledge than other men have. Hence it is that their sins stand in the very first position with regard to guilt; and what wonder, therefore, that God should sorely chasten them?

On this thought I will not lay greater stress, but pass on to observe that the sins of the righteous are worse than those of other men from the fact of the greater mercy which they have received. It is impossible for any man to sin so grievously against God as the man who is God's favourite. He who lies nearest to our bosom is capable of grieving us the most. Why is it that the sin of Judas was so great? It was because Judas was an apostle, and he had been a friend of Christ. Jesus might have said to him, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." Christ feels a blow from an enemy, but a stab from his friend is "the unkindest cut of all." What! when Christ hath chosen us out of the world, and hath redeemed us with his precious blood; when God hath taken us into his family, when he hath wrapt the righteousness of Christ about us, like a robe, and hath promised us an eternal dwelling-place at his right hand; shall we sin, think you, and shall not our sin be counted to be a heinous offence indeed, because of the love at which we kicked, and the great mercy over which we stumbled? A husband feels an unkind word from his wife far more than from anyone else, because he loves

her better than he loves others, and therefore hath she the greater power to grieve him; and Christ careth little for all the railing of a wicked world, but if his Church speaks slightingly of him,—if she offends him,—then is he cut even to the heart. If we take anyone into our friendship, we entertain at once a jealousy of him. If he speaks evil behind our back, we say, "If you had been an enemy, I would never have noticed it. You might have said just what you chose, and I should never have rebuked you; but you professed to be my friend, and if you say aught against me, I cannot bear it; this wounds me sorely, and therefore I must rebuke you for it."

One good old writer says, "When the Lord takes a man to his private chamber, and admits him into his secrets, he at once becomes jealous of him, he will not permit him to sin so deeply as others. 'Oh!' saith he, 'have I made thee my friend, have I walked with thee, have I permitted thee to lean thy head upon my bosom, and wilt thou go away, and break my laws, and rebel against One who has been so loving to thee as to admit thee into the secret place of his tabernacle? Then, surely, thy sin is great indeed, and I will chasten thee for it.'" Beloved, if you will set your sins in this light, you will at once perceive that it is no wonder that God chastens you. Ah, brethren! when we think of the great mercy of God to us,—of his overflowing kindness, both in providence and grace,—when we meditate upon the fond affection which has cradled us from our youth up, and the strong protection that has guarded us from all harm, surely we must think that offences against God, committed by us, are worse than the sins of other men, who have never tasted of such mercies as those which we daily receive. This, also, is another proof of the greatness of the sin of God's people as compared with the sin of others, and is a reason for his chastising them.

Besides, my friends, the sins of God's people are worse than those of other men from the ruinous effect of their example. When a worldling is seen drunk, there is sin, of course; but when a church-member is seen reeling in the streets, how much worse it is! The world makes this a grand excuse for itself. It is under the shadow of the imperfections of the Church that wicked men find shelter from the scorching heat of their conscience. If they can detect their minister in sin, if they can find out a deacon or an elder indulging in iniquity, if they can quote a justification from the lips of a church-member, how content and pleased the wicked are! They did, as it were, but walk in their transgressions before; but when they find a church-member in the same path, then they run greedily in the way of iniquity. I say, brethren, our sins deserve twice the afflictions of other men if we rebel, because they do more mischief; and often, you know, judges have to estimate transgressions, not merely by their guilt, but by the influence of the example of the criminal; and so, God will the more heavily chasten his people because, if they sin, they do so much damage to the morals of mankind, and bring so much dishonour upon the name of the Lord their God. For all these reasons I am sure I am right in saying that the sins of God's people are, in God's esteem, worse than

the sins of other men; and perhaps this is one reason why he always chastens them, even when he lets the wicked go unpunished for a while. This is not, however, the grand reason; I come to another.

Why doth God chasten his people while he permits so many others to go unpunished? I take it that another reason is, *that he may give a manifest and striking example of his hatred of sin.* When God chastens an ordinary man for iniquity, his justice is seen; but when he lays his rod upon his own child, then at once you discover how much he hates iniquity. When Brutus condemned traitors, Rome could see his justice; but when his two sons are brought up, and accused of the crime, and he says, "Lictors, do your duty; strip and beat them;" and after they have been scourged, when he bids them take them away, and treat them as common malefactors, then all Rome is startled with the inflexibility of the justice of Brutus. So, when God smites his own children, when he lays the rod on those who are very dear to him, when he makes them public examples, then even the world itself cannot withhold its admiration of the justice of God. When David—the man after God's own heart—was smitten so sorely for one sin, God's justice was more fully manifested than in the punishment of a hundred ordinary men. There were many men, throughout Jerusalem, ten times worse than David; but they escaped scot free. Not so David, because David was much loved of God, and therefore he must be chastened, that the whole world might see that God hates sin, even when it nestles in the breasts of his own beloved children. Never was there such a proof of God's hatred of iniquity as when he put his own Son to death; and next to that, the chastisement of his own well-beloved children is the most forcible proof of his hatred of iniquity. I take it that this is a second reason why the righteous are so much chastened.

But then the best reason is, *because of the high value which God sets upon his people.* Our text says, "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." God hath a great esteem for his people, and he will not let them perish; but he knows right well that, if he suffered them to go unchastened, they would soon destroy themselves, and lose their interest in his love. This he never can permit, for that were contrary to his oath, and contrary to his covenant. Therefore does he chasten them; so, whenever you are a chastened child of God, you may draw comfort from it. Samuel Rutherford, in writing to Lady Kenmure, who was in deep affliction, having first lost her two children, and then her husband and mother, says, "Your ladyship must certainly be a special favourite of heaven; for if you were not, surely the Lord would not take all this pains to make you fit for heaven. If he did not love you very much, he would not be so jealous of your love. For I take it," he says, "this is the reason why he takes away those who were dear to you,—because he would have every atom of your love, and therefore would not permit anything to be spared to you upon which your heart was set."

As for the wicked, let them have what they please,—let them

set their hearts upon their riches, it is their only treasure,—let them give their love to their lusts and to their carnal pleasures. God wants not their love,—the love of the wicked is not pleasant to him,—he wants not their praises; what have they to do with loving and praising him while they are revelling in their iniquities? But with regard to the righteous, God loves them,—he wants their love, and he will have it, and he will chasten them until he gets it. He will make them even as a weaned child, taking away the breasts of this world from their lips, and putting bitterness into their mouths, till they begin to loathe this world, and long for a better,—long to leave their present state, and to be with him who is their All-in-all. Besides, with regard to the wicked, God saith of them, "Let them go on sinning, let them fill up the measure of their iniquities." A reprobate may be many years in sin before he is discovered or punished. You have known and seen, of late, in the commercial peculations of our time, how long a wicked and ungodly man may go on in sin. Year after year he is embezzling money, yet he is not found out. There are a thousand opportunities for discovery; but, somehow or other, his wickedness is masked, and it seems as though Providence itself helped him to conceal his iniquity; but if you are a child of God, don't you try it, for you will be found out the first time, mark that; an heir of heaven can never go on long in villainy. God will straightway set him up as an object of scorn before men,—and why? Because the Lord loves us, and he does not want us to fill up the measure of our iniquity. He desires to stop us at once in our sin, and therefore you will find this is a fact verified in your observation, if a child of God commits but a small act of dishonesty, it is certain to be found out, but an ungodly man may heap up his iniquities, and yet go unpunished for many and many a day.

Nay, I will go further than that; many a man has pursued a life of fornication and uncleanness, and has never, at least as far as we can see, been punished or chastened. His life seems to have been a continued round of gaiety; he has gone from mirth to mirth, and from merriment to debauchery. He has been the envy of his fellow-men, for the strength of his body, and for the vigour of his health. He has even come to die, and has gone to his grave softly, without a band in his death, or a pang in his last hour,—and why is this? Simply because the Lord said, "Let him alone; he is joined to idols; let him go." God did not care to cast stumbling-blocks in his path; he was running his downward way, and God let him alone. "There," saith he, "let him work his own damnation; let him run the downward road; I will not stop him." And, like the swine possessed with devils, that man has run violently down a steep place into the sea of damnation, and has never discovered his lost state till he has perished in the fiery waters of hell.

But you will not find the child of God go on like that. David grossly sinned once, but it was not long before he was chastened for it. Another man might have lived for years in adultery, and yet not been punished. Not so with the believer; he must be chastened at once. God will keep his people free from the growth

of iniquity. As soon as the first weed springs up, he lays the hoe to its roots; but as for the wicked, their sins may grow till they are great. "Let them alone," saith God; "in the day of harvest, I will say to the reapers, 'Gather them into bundles, and burn them.'" So, you see, it is God's love to his children, his anxious desire that they may not perish, which often brings them into chastisement on account of sin which, otherwise, they might have escaped. If then we are often chastened, and sore vexed, if we are God's children, let us see the loving reason for it, and conclude that "we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

II. And now, having explained the Lord's chastisement of his people, I shall occupy but a very few minutes in showing that GOD, BY THUS CHASTENING US, SPARES US FROM BEING CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD, dwelling simply upon the fact that, though the righteous are chastened here, they never can be condemned in the next world.

We are often charged with preaching immoral doctrine when we say that the righteous man can never be condemned,—that he that believeth in Christ can never be punished on account of his sins. Whatever charge may be brought against us, we are not ashamed to repeat our statement, for thus it is written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The sufferings which God's people feel here are not punishments, but chastisements. If I have ever used the word "punishment" in relation to believers, it must be understood in its restrictive sense.

God has punished Christ, once for all, for all the sins which the elect have committed, or ever can commit; and *it is not consistent with the justice of God to punish the same offence twice in two different persons.* The sufferings of the righteous here are not punitive, they are corrective; they are intended to be chastenings. It is not the sword of the judge, it is the rod of the father, which falls upon the believer. The father may sometimes give his child a sterner and more severe punishment for an offence than even a judge might award. A judge might dismiss a child with a censure for some fault; but the father, when he gets him home, will see him well whipped for it; and so, full often, the chastisement of God, in this world, may even seem to be heavier than if it were punitive. Yet we may always remember this for our comfort,—that God is not condemning us with the world. When he is smiting us, he is not using the rod with which he will break in pieces the wicked; he is not terrifying us with the awful thunders which shall one day make all hell quake with affright. He is but putting on an expression of anger, that he may cleanse our hearts; and is but using the rod with the hand of love, that he may purge us of that folly which is bound up in the heart of his people.

I have said that a Christian man shall never, in the world to come, be condemned for his sin, and it is assuredly true, for the first reason, that God cannot punish twice for one offence; it is also true, for the second reason, that *God cannot condemn those whom he has justified.* That were to reverse what he has once done, and so to prove himself a mutable being. He cannot first give us the wit-

ness of forgiveness, and afterwards the witness of damnation for guilt. It is not possible for him first to kiss us with the kiss of his love, and then afterwards to cast us into hell. God will not play fast and loose with his children, first justifying them through his grace, and then afterwards condemning them through their sin. I say, that were to contradict himself.

God cannot, in the third place, condemn his children, *because they are his children, and he is their Father.* Having taken men into such a relation to himself as to make himself their Father, God hath in that very act put it beyond his own power utterly to condemn and cast them out. He is omnipotent, he can do anything as far as his power is concerned; but he cannot belie the instincts of his heart. Now, no father can forget his child; it is not possible; and it is not possible for God, after he has once forgiven, and has sealed that forgiveness in the glorious privilege of adoption,—it is not possible for him to answer the cry of "Abba, Father," with the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed!"

And, again, it is impossible for God to condemn those whom he has justified, for the reason that, if he did so, *all his promises and the whole tenor of the covenant would be violated.* It was to save from their sins all those who believe in him that Jesus died. If, then, these be not saved, every one of them, his death must be in vain. If those whose sins he carried shall be at last cast into hell, then Christ's project of redemption has never been fully carried out. To suppose a universal atonement, is to suppose that the design of God has been partly frustrated,—that Christ has attempted to do something greater than he will really effect. But here is our solid resting-place,—that the covenant stands secure, and that, in Christ, every stipulation of it is firm, and through him every single article of it shall be carried out. Now, the complete salvation of all the elect is one part of it; and, therefore, chastened though they may be in this world, that is no contradiction to the fact that they shall "not be condemned with the world" hereafter.

I am going to close my discourse with a picture. The last great day is coming. Do you see, yonder, the gathering storm? Do you mark the black clouds as, one after another, they accumulate? For whom is that tempest coming? Can you take a glimpse into the treasure-house of God, and see his hailstones and coals of fire? Can you discover his lightnings, as they are stored up against the day of wrath? For whom are these reserved? You shall hear by-and-by.

Look yonder in another direction, the very opposite. What meaneth that deluge of descending rain? What meaneth the rolling of that awful thunder? I see, in the centre of that storm, a cross. What meaneth all that terrible display of tempest and of hurricane? Why, yonder, there is no sound as yet of storm; it is gathering, but it hath not burst. It gathers still; but, as yet, not a drop of rain descends. The lightnings are bound up in bundles, and are not yet loosed; why is it that, yonder, all is the stillness of a storehouse, and a mighty preparation for war, while, over there, that war is going on, and all the bolts of God are launched? It meaneth this. God has sundered his people from the world. Over yonder, his

wrath is spending itself,—the black clouds are letting out their floods, thunder is poured forth, and lightning is flashing,—where? Upon the head of the mighty Saviour, the dying Jesus.

The wrath must be spent somewhere; and so, in all its fury, it is manifesting itself around Christ; and yonder pilgrims, who are just caught by a few drops that skirt the terrible tempest, are those for whom that tempest is being endured by their glorious Substitute. Yonder tried and afflicted ones, scared by the lightnings, and alarmed by the rumbling of the tempest,—these are the men who have a share in the substitution of Christ. I say the afflictions of God's people are like the tricklings on the skirts of that great tempest,—they are the few drops on the margin of the storm which spent itself on Christ. These men, who in this world suffer afflictions,—righteously endure them, and patiently suffer them, for Christ's sake,—are those who shall have no storm hereafter,—for see, the storm is gone now. All is cleared away; and, instead, the sun shines out in its glory above their heads; angels are descending, and on angelic wings they are upward borne to a temple, and to mansions prepared for them in the presence of their Father.

But see yonder men and women; they are dancing merrily. Though all overhead is black, not a drop of rain has fallen yet. Mark how they are marrying and giving in marriage, for not a bolt has yet been launched. Who are these? Alas! poor wretches, these are the men for whom the Judge is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. For them he is reserving fire and brimstone, hot coals of juniper, and terrible destruction. They look askance on yonder pilgrims slightly wetted with the storm; they make a mock of yonder poor converted ones, trembling as they hear the rolling thunder. They say, "We hear no tempest; it is all a delusion, there is no storm." Ay, sinners; but the day is coming when you shall discover your mistake. You have your portion here; but believers are happier, as they are all saved for the great hereafter. You have no bands in your death;—it is that you may have the tighter bands in hell. You have few afflictions here;—it is that they may be doubled to you hereafter. You go merrily through this world, you carry the lamp of joy with you;—it is that your blackness may be the more terrible, and your darkness the more awful, when you are excluded from earthly joys, and shut up for ever in the outer darkness, where there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

It is pleasant to pass through a country after a storm has spent itself,—to smell the freshness of the herbs after the rain has passed away, and to note the drops after they have been turned to diamonds in the sunlight; that is the position of a Christian. He is going through a land where the storm has spent itself; or if there be a few drops, the written page of the covenant cheers him on, and tells him this is not for his destruction. But how terrible is it to witness the approach of a tempest,—to see the preparation for the storm, to mark the birds of heaven as they flutter their wings, to see the cattle as they lay their heads low in terror, to

discern the face of the sky black, the sun which shineth not, and the heavens which give no light! How terrible to stand on the verge of a horrible hurricane,—such as occurs, sometimes, in the tropics,—to know that we cannot tell how soon the wind may come in fury, tearing up trees from their roots, forcing rocks from their pedestals, and hurling down all the dwelling-places of man! And yet, sinner, this is just your position. There are no hot drops as yet fallen, but a shower of fire is coming. There are no terrible winds blowing on you, but God's tempest shall surely come. As yet, the water-floods are dammed up by mercy, but the floodgates shall soon be opened; the bolts of God are yet in his storehouse; but, lo! judgment cometh, and how awful shall be that moment when God, robed in vengeance, shall come forth in fury! Where, where, where, O sinner, wilt thou hide thy head, or whither wilt thou flee? Oh, that the hand of Mercy may now lead thee to Christ! He is freely preached unto thee, and Thou knowest thy need of him. Believe in him, cast thyself upon him, and then the fury shall be overpast, and thou needest not dread to go into eternity, for no storm awaits thee there, but quiet, and calm, and rest, and peace for ever.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

RUTH I.

Verse 1. *Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.*

That was a bad move on their part. Better poverty with the people of God, than plenty outside of the covenanted land.

2. *And the name of the man was Elimelech,—*

"Elimelech" means, "my God is King." A man with such a name as that ought not to have left the kingdom where his God was King; but some people are not worthy of the names they bear.

2. *And the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.*

That is generally what happens; those who go into the country of Moab continue there. If Christians go away from their separated life, they are very apt to continue in that condition. It may be easy to say, "I will step aside from the Christian path for just a little while;" but it is not so easy to return to it. Usually something or other hampers; the birdlime catches the birds of Paradise, and holds them fast.

3, 4. *And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.*

Which was about ten years too long. Probably they did not intend to remain so long when they went there, they only meant to be in Moab for a little while, just as Christian people, when they fall into worldly conformity, only purpose to do it once, "just for the sake of the girls, to bring them out a little." But it happens to them as it is written here: "and they dwelled there about ten years."

5. *And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.*

That seemed to be her great grief—that she was left. She would have been content to go with them, but she was left to mourn their loss.

6. *Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab:*

It is often the case that, when our idols are broken, we turn back to our God. It is frequently the case that the loss of earthly good leads us to return to our first Husband, for we feel that then it was better with us than it is now. Naomi had also another inducement to return:—

6. *For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.*

Have any of you professors gone a long way off from God? I wish you knew what plenty there is in the Great Father's house, and what a blessed feast there is for those who live with him. There is no famine in that land; there is plenty of gladness, plenty of comfort, plenty of everything that is joyful, to be found there. You need not go to Moab, and to her false gods, to find pleasure and satisfaction.

7—9. *Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.*

Separation was painful to them, for they loved their mother-in-law, a most unselfish person who, even though it was a comfort to her to enjoy their company, thought it would be for their good, in a temporal sense, that they should abide in their own country.

10—14. *And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.*

What a difference there often is between two persons who are under religious impressions at the same time! The one would like to follow Jesus, but the price is too much to pay; so there is a kiss somewhat like that of Judas, and Orpah goes back to her people, and to her idols. But how different was the other case! Ruth was, as it were, glued to Naomi; she "clave unto her," stuck to her, and could not be made to go back with her sister.

15—17. *And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*

That was bravely spoken, and she meant it, too.

18. *When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.*

That is a striking expression, "When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her." O you dear young friends who want to be Christians, how glad we are when we see that you are steadfastly minded to go with the people of God! There are so many who are quickly hot and quickly cold,—soon excited towards good things, and almost as speedily their ardour cools, and they go back into the world. Do ask the Lord to make you steadfastly minded. This is one of the best frames of mind for any of us to be in.

19. *So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?*

They seemed all to turn out of doors to have a look at these two strangers, and especially at Naomi, for she was so different from what she had been when she went away. "And they said, Is this Naomi?" Some said, "Is this Naomi?" questioning. Others said it with surprise as a thing incredible, "This Naomi! How can she be the same woman?" It was very rude of them to turn out, just like people, without sympathy, do on Ramsgate pier, to see the sick passengers land. Nobody seems to have said, "Come into our house to lodge," but all questioned, "Is this Naomi?"

20. *And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,—*

"Call me not pleasant."

20. *Call me Mara:*

That is, "bitter."

20. *For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

It was a pity for Naomi to say that; yet I fear that many of us have done the same. We have not borne such sweet testimony to the Lord as we might have done, but have sorrowfully moaned, as this poor woman did:—

21. *I went out full,—*

Why, then, did you go out?

21. *And the LORD hath brought me home again empty:*

Ah! but he *has* brought you home again. Oh, if she would but have noticed the mercy there was in it all, she might still have spoken like Naomi; but now she speaks like Mara,—bitterness. Her husband and her two boys—all her heart's delight—were with her when she went out; and now that they are gone, she says:—

21. *Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Yet it is a sweet thing to be able to trace the hand of God in our affliction, for nothing can come from that hand towards one of his children but that which is good and right. If you will think of those hands of which the Lord says, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," you may rest assured that nothing can come from those hands but what infinite wisdom directs, and infinite love has ordained.

22. *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*

That is, at the time of the passover; let us hope that they received a blessing in observing the ordinances of that time, and that they were thus helped to get back to the only right and happy state of heart.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAYING *VERSUS* DOING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, May 1st, 1879.

"A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not."—Matthew xxi. 28—30.

THE father had a right to the services of both his sons, for they were, according to the strict rendering of the word, children, or young men under age. They depended upon him for everything, so they were bound to obey his commands. He did not lay upon them any very heavy tax. He simply asked that they should set to work in his vineyard, and go at once, seeing that, probably, there was need for the vines there and then to have their earnest attention. "Son," said he to the first, "'go work to-day in my vineyard,'—do not toil for a stranger, nor for some master at a distance, but work in my vineyard. You are my son, you have a share in the fruit of the vineyard, so go at once, while your services will be the most valuable, and work in my vineyard." The son replied, "I won't;" for that expression, in its bluntness and brevity, gives more nearly the sense of the Greek than even our rendering, "I will not." "I won't;" that is a straight, positive, plain refusal. Notice that there is not even the word "sir" to soften the reply. The second son said, "I go, sir;" but this first one did not say, "I will not, sir;" but just, "I won't; and there is an end of it." "But afterward," though he had thus spoken so rudely, unkindly, and wilfully against his father, "he repented, and went;" and I daresay, by his zeal and industry, he accomplished a good day's work. Though the day began so badly, it ended all right.

Now, I feel persuaded that there are here some persons like this elder son; here and there is one or another who has said, "I won't." As plainly and as rudely as they could, from their very childhood, they cast off parental restraint; and when they became more completely masters of themselves, and the gospel was preached to them,

each of them very distinctly said, "I won't." Some said, "We won't hear it." They became Sabbath-breakers. Others, who heard it, said, "We won't believe it." They became hearers only, rejectors of what they heard. Conscience came, and said to them, "You are very wrong in acting thus;" but they had, all the while, one short, straight answer, which they did not stammer in giving; they said distinctly, "We won't." There are some here who used to say this by wilful transgression. There was scarcely any sin which they did not attempt to commit if it ministered any pleasure to them. They were greedy after it; and even when there was no pleasure apart from the sin of it, they found a pleasure in the very sinfulness of the sin. They said, "We won't," most plainly; there was no hypocrisy about them; there was no mincing the matter with them; they were as bold as brass against the Most High.

But it has happened to some of us that there has come an "afterward" as it did in the case of this elder son. Thought followed upon indifference; we were led to consider our ways, and then we began to say to ourselves, "Have we treated our God rightly?" Then the Holy Spirit came—that blessed Spirit, without whom there is no right consideration,—to teach us reason, and to make our hearts to be what hearts should be,—not stony things, but hearts of flesh; and we said to ourselves, "This disobedience will never do; it is not just or right. Neither does standing idle minister any comfort to us; and, moreover, Satan has already found some mischief for our idle hands to do." We thought that we should probably slide from one sin to another, and grow gradually worse and worse; and we were startled at such a thought, so we repented. By the gracious working of the Spirit of God, we were led to cry for mercy upon our obdurate hearts, and to ask for him to renew us, crying, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned;" and it came to pass that we "repented and went," and happy was the day when that happened. It is a good many years with some of us since we "repented and went," but we have never repented of that repentance, nor ever wished that we had not entered the vineyard. We have begun to taste the clusters, and we have been more than repaid for all the service that we have rendered by the sweetness of the fruit, and our prayer is that we may continue labouring in that vineyard till our Heavenly Father shall call us home. We would like to have a long day of toil if it shall please him; as long as we have any degree of strength, we wish to labour in his service, for it has become perfect freedom for us now, and his yoke is easy, and even his burden is light. We have a sacred pleasure in his service; and you may guess, therefore, what pleasure we shall have in his rest.

"If life be long, I will be glad
That I may long obey:
If short,—yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?"

Now we are moved to great anxiety concerning some of our fellow-men who talk as we used to do. I must confess that I do not at

all look with despair upon a man who says, "I won't." I am sorry that he should be so hard of heart, but I am somewhat glad that he does not try hypocritically to put on the appearance of sensitiveness and of obedience. I do not quite agree with the Quaker, who, when he heard a man swearing, said to him, "Swear away, friend, swear it all out of thee, for thou canst never go to heaven while there is any of that in thee." I am afraid that the swearing process does not get the evil out of a man, but rather increases the quantity that is in him. That which comes out of a man defiles him, and makes him even worse than he was before. Such open sin can never be a good thing; still, I could almost wish that some people, when they do reject the Saviour, would do it openly. I could almost wish that I could bring them to a point where they must avow their decision, so that they would have to say, either "I won't," or "I will;" for, peradventure, the very echo of their rebellious voice might be blessed by the Spirit of God to their awakening. It might seem to them, though it really is not, but it might seem to them a more solemn thing to say, "I won't," than it is not to go; for, often, the actual doing of a wrong thing is easy to a man, but the saying that he means to do it, or even the confession that he has done it, is not quite so easy. The ear does not so soon get accustomed to the declaration concerning sinning as the heart does to the existence of the sin itself.

Now, my brother, you have said, "I won't." Let me ask you to stop and consider a little. Do you not know that many an one, who at first said, "I won't," has afterwards come to Christ? If it were a proper thing to do, I could point out, with my finger, numbers of persons, who are sitting here, who often vowed that they would never enter this place; but here they are, and they often come. There are others, who had a most contemptuous opinion of the preacher, for whom, at this moment, they have the greatest affection. They said they would never be found amongst those whom they called "canting Methodists." Well, they are exactly where they said they never would be, though we do not cant, and we are not Methodists; and others are now describing them by that very name which once they abhorred. I have heard it said, though I do not think it can be so, that almost all true love begins with a little aversion; but this I know, that true love to Christ often springs up in the hearts of men who had a very great deal of aversion to him.

If I can get a man to think enough about Christ distinctly to avow that he will not yield to him, I have much more hope of him than of that man who will not think at all,—I mean the one who passes Christ by with even greater disdain, and who says there is nothing in him that is worthy of his consideration. Ah, my dear friend! I should like to hear you when you stand up to preach the gospel,—you who now deny the cardinal truths of the gospel. When the Lord brings you out of your present sinful state, oh, how boldly you will declare his saving grace, and his wondrous power! I should like also to hear you preach, my friend,—you who now find all your delight in sensuality, and who ridicule the very thought of righteousness. What a miracle of mercy you will be, and how

sweetly you will tell to others how the Lord passeth by iniquity, transgression, and sin! I know you think it will never be the case with you; but I trust it will be; and, in order that it may be, I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to reconsider that ignorant determination of yours,—for I venture to call it so,—that foolish resolution, which sprang from your old corrupt nature; that you may afterwards repent, and do the Lord's will.

I have not any more to say upon that part of my text, for I am going to spend the rest of the time allotted for discourse in dealing with the other character. The father afterwards went to his second son, and said to him what he had said to his brother; "and he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not."

You will notice, in your Bibles, that the word "go" is printed in italics, to show that it is not in the Greek. It was very properly supplied, by the translators, to give the sense of the original; but I can give you the meaning without that word. His father says to him, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard;" and his answer is, "I, sir;" as much as to say, "Even if nobody else goes, I will; I am your man." You know how we commonly put it, "I'll be there, sir. Oh, yes! you bid me go; just so; I'll go." You scarcely need to say the word "go," but just, "I, I, sir; I am your man; you may depend upon me."

And you will also notice that the second son used the word "sir" by way of respect. There was very little respect in his heart, but there was a good deal on his lip. He said, "I, sir," as if he was so prompt that he had not time to put all the words together, and so deferential that, even when he was in a haste to speak, he did not leave out the term denoting respect, but said, "I, *sir*." Now, as soon as you heard him speak so cheerfully, so promptly, so respectfully, you expected to see him shoulder his tools, and get away among the vines; you are sorely disappointed to find that, although he said, "I, sir," he "went not."

I am going to speak, first, about *a nominal consent to the gospel;* secondly, about *that actual disobedience which spoils the nominal consent;* and then, thirdly, about *the special danger to which people of this sort are exposed*, those who so readily say, "I go, sir," yet who go not. I feel sure that there are some here who belong to that class of persons, and therefore I would like to speak very plainly and very personally, because I want you to be converted by God's eternal Spirit. I pray that he may, this very hour, turn you from merely saying "I go," and make you to become one of those who really do go to work heartily in the vineyard of the Lord.

I. Why did this second son say, "I go, sir," and give THIS NOMINAL CONSENT? What did it mean in his case, and what does it mean when we get that kind of consent from so many of our hearers?

I suspect, in their case, it means, first, that *they admit that the Word which is spoken to them is quite right.* Sin is set before them in its real character, they are reminded of its heinousness, and they say, "Yes, that is true." They do not wish to dispute that point. They are then reminded that repentance must be found in any heart that expects forgiveness, and they say, "Yes, that is quite

correct, and very proper." Then they are told that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and they are glad to hear it; they are reminded that they must look to Jesus as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, and lived. They are told how simple the plan of salvation is, how very plain it is, that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,"—

and they say, "Yes, that is very delightful, very blessed news, and we are glad to hear it." They do not dispute about it, but agree with all we say. Then they are told, "Ye must be born again;" and it is explained to them that the whole life must be altered, that the principles which rule and govern that life must be entirely changed, and that there must be imparted to them a new creation from the Holy Spirit; and they bow the head, and say, "Yes, yes; that is quite orthodox, it is very sound, it is very proper; we quite agree to that." There is no cavilling as they go down the aisle, no disputing when they get home. They let it all in at one ear, and they let it all out at the other, by way of letting the gospel have free course, I suppose; but nothing comes of it all. Having said, "I go, sir," there the matter ends, for with all their apparent agreement, they go not.

Sometimes, however, they go a stage further than that, and *promise consideration in the future.* While the preacher has been setting before them life and death, eternal joy and everlasting misery, and has been entreating the Holy Spirit to decide them for Christ and for salvation, they have said within themselves, "These things are very important, and ought to be attended to; and with the blessing of God, they shall be attended to by us." A hearer of this sort begins to say to himself, "I feel very uneasy in my present position; it is high time that I should get out of this condition, and seek to become a new man altogether, renewed in Christ Jesus. I must think of this matter; when shall it be? I do not think it is convenient just now; but, some time or other, when it is, I will think this matter out. I begin to get concerned, because I am over forty now; so I am getting on in life. I have been a hearer of the gospel these twenty or thirty years, and still I am not saved; it is time that I should sit down, and consider these things seriously, and be decided one way or the other; and, please God, I hope that shall be the case with me. It is right that the preacher should be so earnest about me; I feel it to be a most important matter. I pray that I may continue to feel it; and when I get home, I will seek God's face. Well,—perhaps I had better not say I will do so when I get home, for I have an engagement that I must fulfil first. So, not perhaps to-day, but one of these days I will seek the Lord."

Now, if that person could be informed that he would live twenty years more, and at the end of those twenty years he would not be one solitary inch nearer salvation than he is now, but would still be resolving, and promising, and that the whole of his resolves and promises would come to nothing, he would be astonished, and would say, "Oh, no! I do not mean to act like that. When I speak of

a convenient season, I mean in a very short time; I do indeed. Not, of course, just now, as I have said; there is that gay party I want to attend; then I have a ticket for the theatre, and I must use that; but I do intend to be a Christian, though not just now. Still, I am not going to put it off for twenty years; oh, dear no! I could not run such a risk as that." Well, now, this is another case of a person saying, "'I go, sir;' oh! believe me, I am resolved to go. I pray you do not doubt it. There are strong desires within my spirit towards that which is right and good; it must be, and it shall be so, though not just now." Yes, "I go, sir," and he "went not."

Perhaps I may have already described what has passed through some of your minds, but I have known some get further,—I am grieved to say, much further, and yet really go further back,—for *they have made a profession of having gone into the vineyard.* They have come forward, and have said, perhaps not quite what was a deliberate lie; but, still, what was not actually true,—that they were believers in Jesus Christ. I mean that it was not an intentional lie, for they had some sort of hope of salvation; yet, they had no solid ground for that hope, so their profession was a false one. They said that they were renewed in heart, but those who saw them at home could not think that it was so, for their lives did not show that the spirit of Christ was in them. Some of them were baptized, for they said that they were dead to the world; but it was a very lively kind of death. They came to the communion table, and they said that they had fellowship with Christ there; but their temper at home, and their general spirit did not betoken any real fellowship with him; one would never have imagined that they had been with Jesus, and had learnt of him.

It is very dreadful to reflect that there should be such persons, no doubt, in all churches, either self-deceived, or else having some sort of pretence and likeness to the right thing, and misled by that glittering appearance without really meaning to deceive themselves. I am greatly afraid for any of you who manage to get into the church without being converted. You are much worse off than you were outside, because the tendency with you is, when there is a searching truth that ought to come home to you, to say, "It does not refer to me, for I am a church-member." Yes, and so was Judas; he was even an apostle, yet you know how terrible was his end. When I am reading one of the stern passages of Scripture, I always like to pray to God to let it come right home to my heart, because the devil says to me, "Why! you are a minister of the gospel, and you have brought hundreds and even thousands to Christ; you cannot be mistaken." Ah! but I may be; at least, I am bound to continue self-examination, and still to come to Jesus as a poor sinner resting alone in him. That must be the case also with you who have been church-members for years; or else it may turn out that you not only said, "I go, sir," but that you even said, "I have gone," and yet, all the while, you never went at all. It will be an awful thing for a soul to stand at God's judgment-bar with its mask taken off, and to have Christ's eyes of fire reading it through and through, and reading out this sentence, "Thou hadst

a name to live, but thou wast dead; thou hadst a form of godliness, but didst deny the power thereof." God help us all to be clear of this terrible evil!

"Searcher of hearts, before thy face,
I all my soul display:
And, conscious of its innate arts,
Entreat thy strict survey.

"To humble penitence and prayer
Be gentle pity given;
Speak ample pardon to my heart,
And seal its claim to heaven."

Another phase of this same very sad and dangerous character is the way in which *many people occupy themselves with spiritual day-dreaming*. I think you know what I mean. They picture to themselves what they ought to be, or what they would like to be. They assent to the precepts of the gospel that they are good; they read the biography of some eminent person, and they wish that they bore his name; or, at any rate, they rehearse his character, and they say to themselves, "Now that is just what we should be, if we were in similar circumstances." Of course, they are not in such circumstances, so it is very easy to dream what they would be. Many young people spend a great deal of time in speculating on all the wonderful things they will do when they reach a certain age or position, and many poor people think of what they would do if they had a heap of money. Probably they would not do anything of the sort; but, still, they dream about it; and it is a very curious fact that you can dream over what you would do till you imagine you have done it, and you pat yourself on the back, and say, "That is well done, my good fellow; that is a first-rate thing;" yet all the while it has been nothing but a dream. But you may so delude yourself that, as you go down the street, you may half wonder that the people do not say, "Look at that generous man; at least, he would be generous if he had ten thousand a year. Look at that noble confessor of Christ; he would stand and preach to crowds if he had only got a voice. Look at that excellent woman; what a splendid mother she would be! How she would bring up her children in the fear of God, only she has no children! What an excellent mistress she would be if she had any servants! What a splendid employer of labour such-and-such a man would be, only he does not happen to be an employer, for he is only a servant!" Many of us wish that we were in somebody else's shoes. Ah, then we could run! If we had somebody else's armour on, then we could fight; but as we have only our own armour, and our own shoes, and our own feet, we cannot do what we would like to do; and, often, we do not do anything at all; but, still, we make up for that by dreaming beautiful day-dreams.

I have known many young men who might have done something if they had given up dreaming of what they would do if,—oh, that "if"! He who does not serve God where he is would not serve God

anywhere else. "My soul is among lions," says one; "how can I serve God?" What did Daniel do when he was in that position? "Oh! but I am as poor as poverty can make me," says one; "what can I do?" What did Job do when he was in that condition? "Oh! but I seem to be cast out from my own family, and to be persecuted or neglected by everybody." What did Joseph do when that happened to him? "Oh! but I am despised and rejected." What did our Lord Jesus do when he was in that condition? It is where you are that you are to fight the battle of life,—not somewhere else; and it is as you are, the very man that you are, and just now, this very hour, that God calls you to work in his vineyard.

But if you say, "I could work in the vineyard if it was cooler weather;" or if you say, "I could work in the vineyard if the sun was shining, and it did not rain; I could work in the vineyard; but, you see, my knife is so blunt, my spade is not the right kind of tool for me to use;" I know what is the matter with you. Lazy people always find fault with their tools, and those who do not intend to work always find some excuse or other; and then they make up for their laziness by having a delicious spiritual dream. Half the nominally Christian people about us are dreaming; and they consider that they are thus doing the work of the Lord. They are only doing it deceitfully by putting dreaming into the place of real service.

There are others who say, "I go, sir," and yet they go not, because *they attend to all the externals of religion, but their heart is not right with God.* They say, "I attend twice on a Sunday at public worship; I take a class in the Sunday-school; I go to the prayer-meeting, and the week-night lecture; I am always ready with my contribution for every good cause; in fact, there is nothing possible to me that I do not do." Yes, but all these things are mere shells; have you the kernel? These things are excellent cups and platters, washed on the outside; but is the inside of the cup and the platter washed, too? The children's hymn puts a solemn question,—

> **"I often say my prayers,**
> **But do I ever pray?"**

I often sing a hymn, but do I really praise? I mingle with the worshippers within the house of prayer, but do I worship God in spirit and in truth? I talk of Christ, and hear of him; but do I truly trust him? Do I love him? Is my heart really his? For, if not, I am only offering to God the external service which he abhors, and my prayer will be an abomination in his sight. My heart must go with all I do, or else I say, "I go, sir," yet I go not.

I may put all these things together, and say that very many, who hear the gospel, *are in a most delightful state of mind;* they are worked up into such a condition that, if anybody were to look them in the face, and venture upon a description of them, it would certainly be, "Surely, those people are converted." Perhaps they are almost persuaded to be Christians; possibly they are not far from the kingdom of God; yet there they linger, shivering on the brink, on the wrong side of the line that divides saint and sinner,—

dead in sins still, and yet looking as if they really were possessors of eternal life.

What is the reason why they go so far as to give this nominal consent to religion, and yet do not actually trust Christ? I suppose, with some it is because they are naturally plastic. There are many members of the Pliable family still living, and some of the Obstinate family. Obstinate does not pretend to go on pilgrimage, he scorns the idea; but Pliable says that he will go with Christian, and he actually starts with him, but he turns back as soon as they get to the first difficulty. He is ready for anything; you can twist and mould him any way you please; but I bid you to beware of Mr. Pliable, lest you should become like him.

Then there are others who are anxious to please. Their dear friends are concerned about them. Their minister is in earnest about their salvation, and they wish to please him, so they consent to the gospel that it is good, and they go a considerable way in the right direction; but their heart does not go, so they are still unsaved. Some do not like to give themselves trouble. If to be saved were just a matter of giving what they have, they would part with their last garment for it; but to have to consider, to repent, to forsake favourite sins, to trust alone in Jesus,—such things are too spiritual for them. If it were some outward performance,—"taking the sacrament," or being baptized,—they would not mind that; but to give up sin, to consider their ways, and think upon their heart's condition in the sight of God, to repent of sin, and believe in Jesus,—this is too much trouble for them. The last thing that some people will do is to think; they would rather have a day's hard work on the treadmill than ten minutes' solitary, serious thought.

Then there are some who partly yield to the claims of the gospel, because it quiets their conscience. If they were to say, when the sermon is over, "I will not have this Man to reign over me. I will not be washed in the blood of Jesus;" if they were to say that outright, their conscience would say, "What are you at? what are you at?" and they would not be able to sleep at night; so they say, "Conscience, be quiet; I believe it all, and I will attend to it by-and-by. Mr. Conscience, do not roar like a lion; do be quiet; you are bringing me to my knees, you are making me shed tears; come now, do not be so uproarious; do be still. I will listen to you by-and-by; go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee." So they say, "I go, sir," because it quiets conscience for a time, and they can go on sinning as before.

II. Now, secondly, just a few words upon THEIR ACTUAL REFUSAL. The second son said, "I go, sir," but he went not; and these people do not go. They talk of repenting, but they do not repent. They speak of believing, but they never believe. They think of submitting to God, but they have not submitted themselves to him yet. They say it is time they broke up the fallow ground, and sought the Lord, but they do not seek him. It all ends in a mere promise.

I suppose *they consider that the promise is enough.* But do not,

I beseech you, think to mock God in this way. If you were hungry, would you consider that the promise of a meal was sufficient? Do you reckon with your debtors that, when they promise to pay you, it is enough though they never meet your demands? And do you fancy that the eternal God is to be put off with these vain resolutions, and to be mocked with these idle dreamings of what you will do, when you do nothing whatsoever? Oh, may God save you from such a delusion!

I have known a man say, "I go, sir," but he has not gone, *because he would not give up some sin.* I have met with persons seriously concerned about their souls, who, nevertheless, would not give over tippling. They had fallen into that evil habit, and it was a stumbling-block in their way. I have known others deeply concerned about their souls, who would not give up certain attractive companions, who ought not to have charmed them, for the charm was poisonous and deadly to their souls, yet they would not flee from it. Sweet Sin-hold is one of the castles of the devil where he shuts up many a poor prisoner.

Then *the fear of man has kept many back.* They felt that they must confess Christ, but they dared not do it, for some fool or other would laugh at them, or give them the cold shoulder; so they have brought upon themselves the doom foretold in the Book of Revelation, "the fearful, and unbelieving, . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." O sirs, be afraid of being afraid whenever you find yourself afraid of following the Lord Jesus Christ!

Some people have said, "I go, sir," but *they put off the going from time to time;* and that is why they did not go. Oh, that fatal procrastination,—that delaying, that postponing! When a man once realizes that it must be now or never with him, then, sirs, it will be now! If any soul is brought to say, "Now or never! I will find Christ now, or I shall never find him;" he shall find Christ now. There is no promise given that, if you seek the Lord to-morrow, you shall find him. I know of no gospel invitations available for a year or a month hence; they all have to do with this present moment. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Can you look the bleeding Christ in the face, and tell him that you will not have him; can you say to him, "I won't have thee"? That will be a far more honest thing than to say, "Thou precious bleeding Lamb, I fain would be washed in thy blood; but not to-day, I must wait a little longer." Then you are not weaned from your sin; you still love it, and you want to hold it. You are not an empty sinner yet; you are not a hungry sinner yet; you are not a longing sinner yet; for when a man is hungering and thirsting, he does not say, "I am so hungry, give me bread to-morrow. I am parched with thirst; my mouth is like an oven; give me drink to-morrow." No, he does not hunger, he does not thirst, if he talks about delay. Come, then, poor hungering, thirsting ones; God help you to come, and find Jesus Christ at once! Otherwise, you will probably never come to him at all; but your apparent consent will be an actual refusal after all.

III. I might have said much more on this point, but I prefer to dilate, for the last few minutes, on the third most solemn head, namely, THE VERY SERIOUS DANGER IN WHICH THESE PEOPLE ARE FOUND. They say, "I go, sir," but they go not.

Observe, first, that *they are sinning against the light.* That son could not say that he did not know he ought to go into the vineyard, for he had actually said, "I go, sir." Some of you cannot say that you do not know the gospel, because you knew it so well that you promised to yield to its claims. You have already felt its power in a measure. Do you not recollect that day when you really had to struggle against conscience, and to make up your mind that you would not yield? Well, then, all that light which you resisted witnesses against you, as well as adds to your responsibility. The poor heathen, who does not know the truth,—the poor outsider, who does not understand the gospel,—has not sinned, and cannot sin, as you have done in thus mocking the Holy Spirit himself, by saying, "I go, sir," yet not going. Your danger lies, therefore, in the heaping up of your responsibilities by sinning against light and knowledge.

It lies also in this, that *it is always a most dangerous thing to lie unto God.* Ananias and Sapphira were not bound to give any money to the apostles when they did give, and they certainly were not bound to give all that they had; but they came, and said they had given all they received for their land, and because they lied unto God, they were struck dead there and then. Take heed, take heed, I pray you, when you say unto the Lord, "I will turn unto thee," lest he smite you on the spot when you lie unto him. Yet have not some of you already lied unto him when you were sick,—when that typhus fever was upon you,—when you were at the gates of the grave? What resolutions you made! What vows you uttered,—all forgotten, all gone to the wind! Ah, friends! all is registered in heaven; it is marked down in God's book of remembrance: "On such a day, So-and-so escaped shipwreck, and afterwards broke his vow. On such a day, So-and-so was brought up from the grave, but afterwards broke his vow." You forget it, but the recording angel has fixed it where the eternal memory will hold it against you for ever, except you repent, and turn unto God. This is a dreadful thing. I wish that I could speak so that you would feel it; but if you do not for the moment, I hope you will turn it over in your mind, and that the Spirit of God will make you think of it at home.

There is this fact, too, to be remembered, that *there is going on, in your heart, all the while, a hardening of conscience.* When a man has said to God, once or twice, "I go, sir," and he does not go, he does not, by-and-by, feel inclined even to say, "I go;" and he feels easier in not going. You may very soon cover your conscience with a fatal film. Did you ever watch the process of a pond being coated with ice? I do not suppose you have ever stood long enough to see it completely done; but, at first, it is such a thin film, it does not seem like ice, but only like water asleep and still. By-and-by, there is just a glassy film, and afterwards it continues to harden

till you might drive a broad-wheeled waggon across the stream, so hard does ice become. Just so is it with men's minds. They film over gradually through the violations of conscience till they become harder than the nether millstone, and like unto adamant.

Then, in addition to that, there is this danger,—*that God may say, "I will never again bid that man go work in my vineyard."* You know how you treat people who act as this son did; you say to a man, "Now go, and do such-and-such a work." He says, "Yes, sir; certainly, sir." If you find that he has neglected it, possibly you try him another time, and when you go to look, and see that he has done nothing, you say to yourself, "I shall never ask him any more, for there is no reliance to be placed upon him." Now suppose the Lord should say, "Let that young woman alone; she has so often broke her word to me. Let that young man alone, he has lied unto me again and again. I will never ask him again." Then, although you should come, and sit here, no sermon will ever come home to you. Whereas you used to feel and tremble, you will say, "The preacher has lost all his power; he does not seem to stir me as he did once." The change will not be in the preacher; it will be the preacher's Master who has said concerning you, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Oh, may God save you from such a judgment as that! Yet common sense and reason teach us that such a doom as that is but natural to those who despise God's warnings.

Well, now, what then? Have I said, "I go, sir," and yet I have not gone? Then, break, my heart! Oh, break, thou rocky thing, to think that I should have lied unto my God! O wretched man that I am, that I should have dared thus to fight against my best Friend, to postpone my bliss, to reject my Saviour! May the Lord begin with you by causing you to suffer that blessed heart-break! Then, the next thing is for you to fall down at Jesu's feet, and cry, "Lord, I have broken my promises, but thou never breakest thine; and thou hast said thou wilt cast out none who come unto God by thee. I come unto thee now while I am in my pew. I may not even talk of going home, or taking a single step, lest that step should be into the bottomless pit. No; but, here and now, I yield my willing heart to thee, if thou wilt but have me. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. My wanderings, Lord, are at an end; I yield myself to thee." Oh, may the Spirit of God work that blessed decision in your mind and heart now! Not to-morrow; you may not see to-morrow; now is what I aim at, and may God the Holy Spirit grant the request that now, ere the hand of that clock shall have made another round upon its face complete, you may have sought and found the Saviour by the guidance of the Divine Spirit who delights to draw men to Jesus! The Lord give you a blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REST AS A TEST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 13TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 4th, 1879.

"Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—Jeremiah vi. 16.

A VERY short time ago, I gave you, in print,* a sermon upon this text which, I daresay, many of you well remember. I am not now going to pursue the same line of thought as I then followed; I have taken this text again, not to preach from all its words so much as from one single truth which is clear in it, namely, that you may judge which is the old path, and which is the good way in which you ought to walk, by this test,—if you are in the old path, the good way, you do find rest for your soul. You may, therefore, judge of your position at the present moment, and test the quality of your religion,—for there are many false faiths, and erroneous creeds, and man-made religions, and evil spirits that have gone out into the world,—but you may try them all by this test; if you are, indeed, in the old path, the good way,—in God's own way,—you do find rest for your soul.

I need not have taken the same text again, for this truth is clearly taught in many other passages of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in that memorable soul-saving invitation of his, says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." From these words, it is clear that, if I have really come to Christ, he has given me rest; and if I have, in very deed, taken his yoke upon me, and learnt of him, I have found a still further rest. But if I neither have rest given to me, nor have a rest which I find, I am led to the conclusion that I have not come to Christ, and am not wearing his easy yoke. Is not that clear reasoning, and should we not thus judge ourselves by what is so manifestly true?

* See *The Sword and the Trowel*, March, 1879, "Incidents of Travel Clustering Round a Text."

Moreover, we have not only the words of Christ to support us in this reasoning, but we know that it is the distinguishing feature of his gospel that it does give this rest of heart. The types and sacrifices under the law never gave any permanent rest; for, although he who brought a sin-offering found peace for the moment, by-and-by he had to bring another sacrifice. The great day of atonement, when it was duly observed with all its holy pomp and ceremony, brought a blessing on the people; but, then, there had to be another day of atonement the next year. Now, if the consciences of those who presented the various victims, had been cleansed from dead works, there would have been no need that there should be a further remembrance made of sin. But none of these things could make the comers thereunto perfect; rest of conscience was not possible under the shadows; it is only to be found in the substance. Every morning had its bleeding lamb, and every evening had another bleeding lamb; blood was perpetually being shed.

"Fresh blood as constant as the day,
Was on their altar spilt;'"—

but our Lord Jesus Christ has this testimony for his glory alone, "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" for all his sacrificial work was done. In the atonement of Christ, there is a real and effectual expiation which there was not in all the types of the law; and the man, who has once received that expiation, is for ever absolved before the judgment seat of God from all his sin. Having believed in Jesus, he sees in his Saviour's sacrifice a full atonement for the whole of his guiltiness, and realizes that he is delivered from it; and, therefore, he has peace and rest of heart, for Jesus does make us perfect in the things that appertain to the conscience. Walking in the light as he is in the light, his blood cleanseth us from all sin, and we understand what Paul meant when he wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

If you have not found rest of heart, dear friend, you have missed that blessing which is peculiar to the gospel dispensation. If you have not found in Christ perfect quiet for your soul, you put him on a level with Moses; and you seem to make out that you will want either another sacrifice, or another something, to make you clear of guilt in the sight of God. This would be casting Christ down from his priestly throne, and robbing him of the brightest jewel in his crown; and this we must never do. So, if we have found the right way, and are walking therein, we must have rest for our soul, for this is the peculiar mark of it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the parable of the prodigal son, pictured to us the result of returning to God in the right way. I need scarcely quote our Saviour's words, for you are probably all familiar with them. That younger son had no rest while he joined himself to a citizen of the far country, who sent him into his fields to feed his swine. He hungered and he thirsted all the while he was there;

but he had no sooner come home, and confessed his faults in his father's ear, and received his father's kisses and words of welcome, than where do we see him? Toiling to gain acceptance with his father? Working in his father's fields until he has earned the right to be again called a son? No; but received with music and dancing, in the best room of his father's house, to be fed upon the daintiest fare that his father's household could afford, and to be welcomed back to his father's heart, to go no more out for ever. Well, now, if you have never heard any music and dancing,—if your soul has never partaken of the fatted calf,—if the Father's kiss has never breathed peace to your troubled spirit, then, methinks, you cannot have come home to the great Father; for, had you done so, there would have been peace in your heart and conscience.

Further, we find that this rest, which is spoken of in the text, has come to those who have trodden the good old way. There are plenty of instances in the Word of God, but one will suffice us as a specimen of many more. How restful is the apostle Paul even amid much that might perplex him! When he is writing his letters, he seems as if he wrote poetry rather than prose when he begins to touch upon the condition of a justified man. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You know that there are many other passages, to the same effect, which I need not quote, all of which prove that he had true peace of heart. Think, too, of his behaviour under trying circumstances; what wonderful calmness he exhibited in times of trial! Before Nero, the cruel lion, on board ship when the vessel was driven upon the rocks, or in the prison where he and Silas sang the praises of God at midnight; wherever you find him,—even when he becomes "such an one as Paul the aged," and he needs his cloak, for the Mamertine prison is cold, still he is always calm, quiet, happy, peaceful.

Yet I need not quote the case of the apostle Paul, there are multitudes of Christian men and women alive who are equally witnesses that the good old way is the way of peace. They are disturbed sometimes, yet their heart is not troubled. I know, perhaps, as well as anyone here, what deep depression of spirit means, and what it is to feel myself sinking lower and lower; yet, at the worst, when I reach the lowest depths, I have an inward peace which no pain or depression of spirit can in the least disturb. Trusting in Jesus Christ, my Saviour, there is still a blessed quietness in the deep caverns of my soul; though, upon the surface, a rough tempest may be raging, and there may be but little apparent calm. Many of you know that it is so with you also. If you have come to terms with God, through Jesus Christ, the great Reconciler, then there is for you "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

I. This, then, is the kind of plumbline that we are going to use to see whether our soul is upright, whether the foundation of our spiritual building is well and truly laid;—IF WE ARE REALLY IN THE GOOD OLD WAY, WE HAVE FOUND REST UNTO OUR SOULS.

This rule proves the rightness of *the way of salvation by grace*

alone through faith in Jesus Christ; for, if you examine all the ways that are opposed to this, you will find that they bring no rest whatever. All the other ways are only different forms of seeking salvation by our own works. The Romish church has embodied to the very full the doctrine of salvation by works, with which indeed is our great quarrel, the same that Martin Luther took up. The Papists would have it that works justify a sinner, but Luther rightly maintained, according to the teaching of Scripture, that faith alone justifies in the sight of God.

Well, now, according to this way of justification by works, they tell us that a man is accounted just before God because of his good works, especially such as his attendances at the various ceremonies of the church, his reception of "sacraments" and the like. But I am bold enough to say that no one, in the church of Rome, ever did have or ever could have, legitimately, any rest of heart through his own good deeds, either living or dying. I have purposely added the word "dying" because I want you to note what is the highest state of blessing to which the best Catholics hope to attain at death. When I was in Rome, I stood in the church of St. John Lateran, and I saw there a notice that there was to be "a mass for the repose of the soul of his eminence, Cardinal Wiseman." "Well," I thought to myself, "if there ever was a man who served his church well, and who was distinguished, not only as a saint, but as a prince of the church, surely this was the man;—yet, when the cardinal dies, he goes somewhere or other,—I do not know where,—but it is somewhere where he has not any repose, because there are to be masses for the repose of his soul, as there were for the repose of the soul of the late pope." Now, if even popes and cardinals go where they do not have any repose, where do ordinary Catholics go? It must be a very poor look-out for them; if I were in their place, I would turn Protestant, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and go to heaven when I might die. There is nothing to be had, you see, for money. The best thing that man can do, is not worth anything in the sight of God; so let no one of us place the slightest reliance upon it.

Take any other form of this error, and you will find that there is no rest in it. The common, somewhat diluted, Protestantized doctrine of salvation by works has just the same flaw in it. If I am to be saved by my own works, when may I know that I have done enough? Never! Never! Even if I could ever have done enough in quantity, I shall soon undo it all by some sin or mistake which would make it valueless; and if I should persevere in well-doing even to the end of my life, and do the best I can all the while, have I not reason to fear that I might still fall short of the divine standard, because my motive or my spirit is faulty; and so, at the last, I should not have the quantity of good works necessary to make me a Christian? Unless you lessen the requirements of the law of God, salvation by works can only be possible upon the condition of absolute perfection; but absolute perfection is beyond any man's reach seeing that he has already sinned.

If, however, you lower the standard, and say that sincere obedi-

ence will avail instead of perfect obedience, who is to decide as to the sincerity? How is a man to be certain even that he is always sincere? May he not, sometime or other, have an admixture of insincerity with his love; and if so, may not that, like a little leaven, sour the whole lump? So unsatisfactory and unreliable is this doctrine of salvation by works that Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest of the Romish theologians, towards his latter end used words something like these,—"that, while it is right to tell the people that they must be saved by their works, yet, inasmuch as few persons can ever tell that they have done sufficient good works to merit salvation, it is, probably, upon the whole, safer to trust in the blood of Jesus Christ than in our own works;" and I hope that the cardinal himself did so. If you put your trust in the blood of Jesus, and rely for salvation upon what Christ has done, you may not only say that it is, upon the whole, safer than trusting in what you do yourself, but you may be sure that it is altogether the better, the diviner, the truer way, for among many other blessings, it gives you peace and rest, which the other system never does and never can. To be continually flogged, like the galley slave tugging at the oar, and to have conscience ever crying, "Do, do, do; this do, and thou shalt live; fail in doing this, and thou shalt die," is to live a dog's life, a slave's life; nay, it is to remain dead in trespasses and sins. But when you come to the gospel plan of salvation, "Believe and live; trust Christ, and you are both accounted righteous and made righteous; rely upon what Jesus Christ has done and suffered, and is still doing;" and then you have God's Word to rely upon, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" "he that believeth on him is not condemned;" "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." When I have complied with the conditions God lays down; that is, when I have believed in Jesus, and have been baptized, I say, "It is enough, my Lord; thy servant is saved; here I find rest unto my soul." O beloved, ask ye for the old path of pardon through the Saviour's sacrifice, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls!

Another old way that I want you to walk in is, *the way of believing the Word of God like a little child.* Here is this blessed Book, and I can honestly declare that, as a rule, I see only one meaning to it; yet, as I read it, I find that there are some difficult passages which I cannot understand. I try all I can, but if I fail, I rejoice that my Heavenly Father will not condemn me if I do not understand them. How can a little child understand all that his father knows? I am even glad that there are some difficult passages, because they are a trial to my faith; yet all that is essential for me to know, it seems to me, is as plain as possible when I just read it as I would read another book. But there are some people who always read the Bible through red or green spectacles, and they see there some wonderful system of theology which I have never yet discovered; in fact, they can find in a text of Scripture what no ordinary person ever would see. I think they must put it there before they find it, though I suppose they do not think so. Then there are others who read the Bible philosophically. I do

not know, often, what they mean, nor can I make head or tail of what they say; one needs to have been born in Germany in order to understand some of their remarks. They seem to enshroud the Bible with a cloud of smoke, so that they do not see in it what I perceive, but they see something very wonderful indeed. Ah, well, brethren! I believe that you do not get any peace for your soul out of God's Word either by trying to clip it down to fit in with some system of your own making, or by spiriting it away in some metaphysical incomprehensibility; but if you just take the Bible in its plain sense, and say, "That seems to me to be what my Heavenly Father means by this passage; it looks very simple and clear to me; I, an unsophisticated person, reading it after seeking the Holy Spirit's instruction and guidance, think it is so; and I believe it, and I act upon it," you will find peace and rest of heart in that way of studying the Scriptures.

Everybody wants to have an anchorage somewhere or other. Many have gone over to Rome because they foolishly imagined that they would there find an infallible church; but if you believe in an infallible Bible, and in an infallible Spirit explaining it, you have all the infallibility that is necessary for mental and spiritual rest; and let me assure you that, if you will but determine that you will believe whatever God says simply because he says it, whether you understand it or not, and if this Book becomes to you the standard of appeal on all disputed points, you shall find rest unto your souls, instead of the disquietude which is bred so abundantly, by so-called "thinking" gentlemen, in these modern times, and which is fed by the articles in Reviews which spread all sorts of doubt on every hand. If you will just come to the Bible, and say,—

> "This is the judge that ends the strife,
> Where wit and reason fail;"—

you will find rest unto your souls. That is another good old way in which I urge you to walk.

A third way I can recommend to you for giving peace of mind and heart is, *the way of living daily by faith in God.* A great many persons fall into the idea that life is to be divided into two parts; so much is secular, and so much is religious. That is a gross error. The whole of a Christian's life should be religious; it should be just as much a part of his religion to deal honestly in trade as to be orthodox in his creed. We are to live unto Christ, we are, as an old saint expressed it, to eat and drink and sleep eternal life. "We are Christians," would have been the answer of the first disciples of Christ if you had asked them what they were. Are you a tent-maker, Paul? "I am a Christian." But you make tents, do you not? "Yes, but I do it all for Christ." How so? You take the money for the tents, and live upon it. "That is in order that I may not be chargeable unto any, that thereby the gospel of Jesus Christ may be freely proclaimed among the heathen. Every stitch I take through the hard canvas is done for Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. While I live, I live unto him; and

when I die, I shall go to be with him for ever." Well, now, beloved, your whole life should be like that; you should spend it all for Christ.

See that the whole of it comes under the governance of faith in God. Have faith in God about everything,—even about that little child that is evidently sickening,—trust the child with God. Have faith about that doubtful customer whose bill is running up so high;—I do not mean, have faith in him, but trust in God, and then use the right means to prevent the man from robbing you. Bring everything to God, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. It is wonderful how differently the days roll round, when they are prayed over, to what they do when you enter upon them entirely by yourself. If you ask God's guidance even about little things, and especially about the things in which you think you do not need any guidance,—for that is, often, where you need it most,—your days shall be spent in peace and restfulness. If you have learnt to bring every burden to the Lord, every care, and every trial, and every loss,—yea, and every joy,—then you shall find rest unto your souls, for this is the good old way of living by faith in which Abraham walked, and it is the way of peace and rest.

Another good old way is, *the way of obedience to the divine commands.* You can be your own master if you like, but that is not the way of peace; but if God be your Master, and you consult his will in everything, and say, "I might have preferred to do that, but instead thereof I shall do this, because I see that it is in consonance with the command of God," you will have peace of mind and heart in doing it, but you would have found no peace in doing the other thing. Suppose that doing right should involve you in trouble, you will be able to bear it very cheerfully because you will say, "This comes through no fault of mine, and it is a pleasure to suffer for doing right." I saw, the other day, a picture of John Bradford, the martyr, kissing the stake. He was represented as standing against the stake by which he was to be burnt alive, and he was embracing it, and kissing it. How could he do that? It is no joyous matter to be burnt quick to the death; but he felt that, as he must die for the truth, and for faithfulness to his God, it was a sweet thing so to die. There is not much stake-kissing, I am afraid, among us now; but it ought to come to that, and it does when a man, conscientiously, and at all hazards, resolves, "I will say the right, and do the right, whatever happens."

If you begin to tack about, and to be guided by policy, not by principle; if you say, "I shall make just a little nick in my conscience here, and another nick there, and I shall put it right by-and-by," you will lose rest. When you get to bed at night, you will not look back upon the day's proceedings with pleasure. When trial comes, you will have nobody to help you. But, on the other hand, if you can say, "In the name of God, have I gone forward in all simple honesty, resting and confiding in him," you shall find that the Lord will not let you be a loser through trusting him. You shall be borne up, and brought through, and you shall bless and praise the gracious Master, who is such a good Paymaster, and who

so well rewards those who diligently seek him. That is another good old way in which I advise you to walk.

I will mention one other good old way, and that is, *the way of close communion with Jesus Christ.* Oh, what a blessed way that is! If you walk in it, you will say, from your inmost soul, unto the Lord, "If thou go not with me, carry me not up hence." You will cry, "I must have Jesus with me, or I dare not leave my chamber in the morning; I must have the assurance of his gracious company, or I shall fear to fall asleep at night." You will sing that delicious hymn, "Sun of my soul," and you will pray to him, and get the prayer answered,—

> "When the soft dews of kindly sleep
> My wearied eyelids gently steep,
> Be my last thought, how sweet to rest
> For ever on my Saviour's breast!
>
> "Abide with me from morn till eve,
> For without thee I cannot live:
> Abide with me when night is nigh,
> For without thee I dare not die."

So will you find such rest for your soul as you could never have known in any other way. The sheep must rest when the shepherd is near. The spouse must rest when her Beloved brings her to the banqueting house, and waves the banner of his love over her. So, keep near to Jesus, for you may be certain that there you will be in the good old way where you will find rest unto your souls.

I wish I had the tongue of the eloquent that I might worthily describe the rest which belongs to the people of God. Do not tell me that there is no rest for us till we get to heaven; we who have believed in Jesus enter into rest even now; why should we not do so? Our salvation is complete; the robe of righteousness, in which we are clad, is finished; the atonement for our sins is fully made; we are reconciled to God, we are beloved of the Father, we are preserved by his grace, and supplied by his providence with all that we need; we carry all our burdens to him, and leave them at his feet; we spend our lives in his service, and we find his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and his paths to be paths of peace. Oh, yes; we have found rest unto our souls! I recollect the first day that I ever rested in Christ, and I did rest that day, and so will all of you who trust in Jesus as I trusted in him. To a labouring man, rest is indeed sweet. Suppose a man is called, through some sudden emergency, to work for twenty-four hours at a stretch; oh, how every bone in his body seems to bless God when he at last is able to rest! It does not matter much if his bed is only the hard floor; he throws himself down, and every limb, as he stretches it out, seems to say, "Thank God, thank God, now I can rest!" That is just how a poor burdened one feels when he comes to Christ. Till he gets to him, the bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it; but when once he trusts in Jesus, he may stretch as much as he likes, and he shall find that he can satisfy

his soul in the abundance of peace and rest that he finds laid up for him in Christ.

II. Now, secondly, I want to speak upon this theme,—REST FOUND BY WALKING IN "THE GOOD OLD WAY" IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL.

Possibly, somebody says, "I can understand that you Christian people, who believe that you are saved through faith, and who sing, as you often do,—

> "'Yes, I to the end shall endure,
> As sure as the earnest is given;
> More happy, but not more secure,
> The glorified spirits in heaven;'—

"I can understand that you enjoy rest; but is that rest good for you, because you know that rest very soon degenerates into laziness?" I have known a man who said that it would take a great deal of rest to knock him up; and I am fully aware that there are some who, spiritually, like the idea of rest, because, as they misinterpret the term, it means to them downright laziness. Nothing to do, precisely suits their constitution. So, let me just show you that no evil consequences ever flow from the rest which God gives to our soul when we walk in the good old way.

For, first, *it brings satisfaction, but not self-satisfaction.* Somebody says, "If I knew that I was saved, I should feel as proud as Lucifer. I should say then, 'That is quite enough for me; I do not want to go any further, for I am all I ought to be.'" Yes, my dear sir, I do not controvert your statement that, very likely, you would say that. While you are what you are, I believe you would talk so; but when God makes a man a new creature, such an idea as that does not enter his head. When he says, "I am saved from condemnation," he also says, "Now I desire to be saved from every propensity to go back to be what I was before. Now that I am clear of guilt, I desire to be saved from ever again living as I formerly did. God has given me salvation, but he means me to work it out; that is to say, he has worked it in me by his gracious Spirit, and I am to work it out in my life; and so to let others see, by my walk and conversation, that I am really saved."

If you were to proclaim liberty to a man who was in prison,—if you went, and opened the door, and said to him, "Now, my good fellow, out of pure grace, Her Majesty freely pardons you, and orders you to be set at liberty;" according to your theory, that man would sit still, and say, "Well, I have got my pardon, I do not want anything more." You know that he would not talk like that; the first thing he would do would be to want to come out, and go home, and see his wife and family; and the very first thing that we feel, when we are saved, is that we want to see our Father who is in heaven, we want to know our dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and we want to do something to show the gratitude which we feel towards God for his abounding mercy towards us. I tell you that the grace of God breeds no self-satisfaction, for we think less of ourselves after we are saved than ever we did before; ay, and the more sure we are that we are saved, the deeper is our sense of

our own unworthiness, and the more do we groan out, "O God, deliver me from the sin that still dwells within me!" He, who has to work out his salvation by his own merits and good deeds, may be content to live in sin; but he who is saved feels that he must no longer be the slave of sin; yet he groans that he often is under bondage; and he cries to God for something better, higher, nobler.

"Yes," says another objector, "but if a man knew he was saved, *it must breed sloth in him*, he would not want to do anything." Again I reply that, if the man was what men are by nature, that is what would happen; but when a man gets changed by grace, it is very different. You think, ye sons of Hagar, children after the flesh, that are under the law, that nobody will do anything unless he is paid for it. You suppose that there is no motive in the world but self-interest,—to escape from hell, and to win heaven. That is the only argument that can have any effect upon you, for you are slaves, you are bond-servants; and that, probably, is all the argument we can use with you at present. But if you ever become children of God, you will find better arguments than these,—nobler and more worthy of men redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. You will each one say then, "I am saved; I have nothing to do in order to be saved, that is all done; I am saved to a certainty; now, for the love I bear my Saviour's name, I will do a hundred times as much as I ever could have done under the threat of damnation, or the offer of entrance into heaven. Now, I am going to live according to the law of that love which—

> "'Makes my willing feet,
> In swift obedience move;'—

"and I will prove to all mankind, by my life, that the impulse of love can produce greater results than the impulse of fear, and threat, and self-interest." Oh, yes! we get a new set of motives; the old ones may cease to influence us, but we get other and higher motives, which enable us to overcome the sloth to which, by nature, we are all too prone.

"But," says yet another friend, "if I believed that I was really saved, I should say, 'Now I may live as I like.'" Ah, my friend! there is nothing I should like better than to live as I like, and do you know how I would live if I could live as I liked? I would never sin again. If I could live as I liked, you should be able to call me a straitlaced old Puritan, with whom you could not find a fault except that I was too strict. That is what I would be if I could live as I liked. But if you, as an unconverted man, live as you like, I should not like to read the record of your life. But we are not talking about men in general, but about renewed men, those who have been changed by grace, and who have become children of God, who like to live after a very different fashion.

"Well," you say, "but if I thought that God never could and never would cast me into hell, and that I was eternally saved, I should go and live in sin." No, no, no; come now, you are quite bad enough, I am sure; but I will not believe even that to be true of you. I cannot think so badly of you as that. There was a little

boy, who had a very kind father; and there were some bad boys, living in the same street, whose father used to horsewhip them, and treat them very cruelly; but this boy's father was the soul of love and kindness. There was an orchard that the bad boys wanted to rob, so they proposed to this other lad that he should go with them. "No," he replied, "I shall not go, for I do not want to grieve my father." "Oh!" they said, "you know that, if we are caught, *we* shall catch it; but your father is so fond of you that he will not beat you, so you may freely go and do it." "What!" he exclaimed, "do you think, because my father loves me, that therefore I will go and do wrong because of that? No, I will do nothing of the kind." You sympathize at once with the boy, and say, "That is right." Very well, I hope you will sympathize with him so much that you will feel that this is the way a Christian acts. He has received so much love from God that he cannot do that which would grieve the One who has been so good and so kind to him. Our God forgiveth our transgressions, and blotteth out the sin of his people because he delighteth in mercy; hence, that love of his has more influence over his redeemed ones than all the thunders and threatenings of the law will ever have over the ungodly. We do enjoy this blessed rest, but we shall ever be ready for service, still be watchful against sin, and constantly be pressing forward towards growth in grace. It is a rest which a man may safely have, and come to no harm thereby.

Beloved, *the man who has rest in his own soul is the man who can best serve God.* Queen Elizabeth once said to a great London merchant, "I want you to attend to some important business for me at the Hague." "Your Majesty," he said, "I am your humble servant; but I have a large business here at home, and, while I have that to attend to, I am afraid I could not discharge your Majesty's business." She said, "You go to the Hague, and see to my business there, and I will attend to your business here." Well, now, that was the man to go with a free mind to attend to Her Majesty's business; and the Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to us, "You go, and serve me in the world, and I will see to the matter of your salvation." The man to whom he thus speaks can give all his thought and care to living to the glory of God and to his service.

More than that,—I will venture on a strong assertion,—*no man is capable of virtue, in its highest sense, until he knows that he is saved.* Just think, if a man simply does that which is right because he expects to be rewarded by God for it, whom is he serving? Why, himself! Are you in the habit of taking your hat off to your working-men at night, and saying to them, "Much obliged to you, gentlemen"? Do they work out of pure love to you? Well, not many of them, I reckon; I do not think there are many masters, who are so specially attractive that anybody wants to serve them without a thought of salary or wages. No, I trow that you thank no man for what he does if he is to be paid for it. Suppose you try to live a good life in order to get to heaven by it, you are simply serving yourself; it is selfishness at the top, and at the bottom, and throughout it all. But the man who comes, and says, "I am

a saved man; eternal love has brought me to Jesu's feet, washed me in his blood, and clothed me with his righteousness; no condemnation do I dread, for this day, or for all the days that are to come; for none can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord;" he begins to serve God with all his might, he loves his fellow-men, and seeks to promote everything that is pure and holy and good. What is his motive? Gratitude, not self-interest; love to God, not love to himself. No longer is the slave-driver's whip cracked in his ear; no bribe of a glorious heaven to be won by merit is held before him; it is his already; now is he capable of the highest virtue. Oh, that you all knew this blessed rest, for then I am sure you would serve God! You may have it, for Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Why will you not have it? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

I have only time for just this final word to you who have this rest. ENJOY IT. Enjoy it now. You are coming to the communion table,—this place of sacred feasting and holy joy. You are not coming to kneel at it as if you were to adore the bread; you are to sit around the table, like persons at a common meal, yet all the while to be feasting with the great King of kings. So be sure that you enjoy Christ, who is your rest. Are you satisfied with Christ? If you are not, you have not really got him. If you have got him, he is everything to you. "Ah!" you say, "satisfied with him? Satisfied with him? That is a very cold word; I am charmed with him. No music is like his charming name; my soul is overflowing with love to him." The other day, I saw a little cup suspended under a flowing fountain, so that the stream came right into it. The cup was quite full, and the stream kept flowing, the cup remained brimming over; and as I stood and looked at it, I thought, "That is very much like myself beneath the flowing of the Saviour's love. I cannot hold much, so it soon fills me, but I can pour it out to others as fast as it comes into me." O come, beloved, come all of you who know the Lord, and put yourselves, like little cups, under the flowing fountain, and be filled with all the fulness of God! What a word that is! I do not know whether you understand it, I do not: "filled with all the fulness of God." Why! you cannot get all the fulness of God into you, can you? Suppose that a bottle were taken, and held down into the sea till the water had filled it; then, when it is quite full, of course it sinks down to the bottom of the ocean. Now I think that the sea is in the bottle, and the bottle is in the sea, and that the bottle is full of all the fulness of the sea,—it contains all it can hold, and then it has all the rest to hold it. Now, just so, get as full as ever you can of the love of Christ, and then sink into the Godhead's deepest sea, be plunged into his immensity, and dwell there, filled with all the fulness of the ever-blessed God. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REHOBOAM THE UNREADY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 20TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 11th, 1879.

"And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD."—2 Chronicles xii. 14.

You have probably noticed that, as a general rule, the sacred historians, at the end of each king's reign, sum up the character of the monarch, and describe him as either doing evil in the sight of the Lord, or doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. They give a summary of his whole life in one or other of these sentences; and there will come a day when there will be a summary of your life and mine; and when it is given, it will run on this wise, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord," or else on this blessed fashion, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." There is no other course beside these two; these characters comprehend all of us, and the summary given in our case, as it was in the case of Rehoboam, will be given with great accuracy. It will be infallible, and it will be irreversible.

This man Rehoboam was not half as bad as some other kings; still, the inspired historian was compelled to say, "He did evil." He was not such an obstinate and outrageous sinner as some were. He was not an Ahab; he was not even a Manasseh, he did not live as that king did in his evil time; yet "he did evil." That is the summary of his whole career. There were some good points about him, as I shall try to show you presently; he did good sometimes: still, when it is all added up, this is the total of it, "He did evil;" and the reason why he did evil is given. One reason, I should think was, that he had a bad mother; observe how it is written, just before the summary of his life, "His mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess,"—one of Solomon's numerous wives,—one whom he favoured most of all; but she was an idolatrous woman, "an Ammonitess." And there is little wonder that, when the father was no better than he should have been, and when the mother was exceedingly bad, the summary of the son's life should

be, "He did evil." This makes marriage a most important step, though it is often taken without a single serious thought. See how a woman's life projects itself, and either casts a ray of brightness over her children's characters, or a cloud of shame over their entire being. What some of us owe to our mothers, we shall never be able to tell. If we had to write down the choicest mercies that God has bestowed upon us, we should have to mention first the mother who prayed for us, and taught us to trust in Jesus, by the Holy Spirit's blessing upon the sweet way in which she spoke to us about the Saviour. But a mother, trained in the school of Satan, and who has become a mistress in the art of sin, is a terrible source of evil to her children. May God have mercy upon any of you mothers who have sons growing up to follow the evil example which you are setting them! Mothers, by the love you bear your children,—and there is no stronger love, I think, on earth,—if you will not think of your own soul's best interests, I do pray you, for your children's sake, consider your ways, and seek the Lord with the purpose in your heart that your children may, if possible, live in the presence of God.

But the Scripture does not give this as the reason why Rehoboam did evil. It does not say that he did evil because he had a bad mother, nor because his father had not walked with God as he ought to have done. No; the reason was, "because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." The Hebrew proverb was, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" but the Lord said to his ancient people, through the prophet Ezekiel, "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. . . . The soul that sinneth, it shall die." God will judge each one according to his own deeds; and if you should, unhappily, have been born of the most ungodly parents who ever lived, there is no reason why God's grace should not begin to work in your family with you. If all your training has been adverse to godliness, the sovereign grace, that takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion, may select you as its object. I know several brethren here, who have each one said to me, with great sorrow, "I am the only one out of my family, so far as I can judge, that knows the Lord. Looking back, I can trace no pedigree of saints; and looking around me, neither brother, nor sister, nor uncle, nor cousin, seems to have any fear of God." Ah, my dear friend! if you have been so distinguished by the grace of God, you ought to love him much, and praise him much; and as you will be sure to be watched, and pecked at, like a speckled bird, mind how you live. May your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. No; though Rehoboam walks in an evil way, it is not set down to the examples of his father and mother; but it is written, "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

What does this expression mean? I am going to try to find out, because I feel sure that the same reason is operating upon a good many other people. It does not say that Rehoboam did evil because

he was of a vicious temperament, or because he had strong passions, or because he was a downright thoroughly bad fellow. No, he was not quite that; but he did evil because of something which he did not do.

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do;"—

and as Rehoboam "prepared not his heart to seek the Lord," Satan found him evil to do, and he did it.

I. So I judge that this expression means, first, that HE DID NOT BEGIN LIFE WITH SEEKING THE LORD.

His father Solomon did; when he found himself lifted up to the throne of Israel while he was yet a young man, Solomon spread his case before the Lord, and asked for wisdom; and, in consequence, taking it as a whole, his reign was a grand one, and his kingdom attained to a high state of prosperity. He was faithful to the worship of Jehovah, in the main, though there was a sad turning aside to idols, and he acted wisely in most of his ways, so that the wisdom of Solomon became proverbial. That result was due to the fact that God gave to him "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." He asked of God wisdom, and God gave it to him; but this foolish son of his asked not for wisdom. The sceptre was there, so he grasped it; there was an empty throne, so he sat down upon it. I daresay he fancied it was a very fine thing to be king over Israel, and his thoughts did not go much beyond the mere external pomp and splendour of royalty. He did not intend any ill, and he was not very determined upon doing that which was right; and probably he never thought of commencing his career by asking the blessing of God upon it. I hope no one, whom I am addressing, would really resolve to lead a bad life; but, mind you, it may happen to you, as it did to Rehoboam, that the summary of your life will be, "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." So much in life depends upon how we begin that I could wish that no boy ever left his home to go to school,—that no boy ever left school to go to a clerkship, or to serve his apprenticeship to a business,—without stopping a while, and praying the Lord to guide him in every step so that he might act wisely. And I might add that it would be well if older men would do the same; and, in beginning anything fresh, prepare their hearts to seek the Lord.

This young man Rehoboam felt that he needed some kind of guidance, yet he did not seek the Lord, but *he called together a number of counsellors.* Now, it is quite right to seek counsel of men who are wiser than we ourselves are; but he who trusts to earthly counsellors, instead of to God, is guilty of great provocation against him who is full of wisdom, and who ought to be the Guide of our youth and of our whole lives. Calling his father's wise counsellors together, at the beginning of his reign, Rehoboam submitted the people's grievances to them; but, like the fool that he was, he rejected their counsel, and followed the foolish advice

of the younger men like himself, the fops about the court, the swells, the gilded youths of the period, and so committed a gross act of folly.

It usually happens that, when men will not ask counsel of God, if they go to other sources for guidance, *they generally accept the very worst form of advice.* When men trust in men, it is strange how often they trust in the worst and not in the best of men. Yet I know not that it is strange, for that same infatuation, which leads a man to reject his God, almost necessarily leads him to despise those upon whom God has bestowed any measure of light and wisdom. So this young prince asked counsel of others, who were as foolish as he himself was, and the result of following their advice was that ten tribes out of the twelve were rent away from him, and formed into an independent kingdom. What a different life there might have been, not only for himself, but for those who were dependent upon him, if he had but humbly waited upon God for guidance, and had given the people a gentle reply to their very reasonable demands, and had ruled them, not with a rod of iron, but with gentleness and kindness! There might have been two Solomons succeeding each other; which, perhaps, is too much to expect among kings and princes, for Solomons are rather scarce in that direction. However, so it was, because he did not begin by seeking the Lord, he made a fool of himself, and a failure of his life.

Perhaps some of you young people say, "Well, we are not going to give our hearts to God, yet we shall not be fools." Ah, but you are fools already, or else you would not talk like that; and the probability is that, before long, in the plenitude of your self-sufficient wisdom, you will take a step, which seems plain enough to you, but which will lead you into a world of sorrow, and to no end of trouble. Blessed is that young man who says, "My Father, thou shalt be the Guide of my youth,"—who gets God on board the vessel of his life at the start, with his hand on the rudder, to steer the vessel through a safe and prosperous voyage till he reaches the Fair Havens, and casts anchor in the Port of Peace.

This, then, was the folly of Rehoboam, that he did not begin life by seeking God, and therefore he began it foolishly.

II. But our text means more than that; it means, next, that REHOBOAM SHOWED NO HEART IN DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT.

He did what was right at the first, but he had no heart in doing it. The prophet came to him when he had mustered his forces, and forbade him to go to war with the followers of Jeroboam, and he disbanded all his troops. That was, truly, a most worthy thing to do; and you and I, looking on at the scene, would have said, "That is a noble young prince; if he obeys the voice of a prophet like that, surely he fears God." But he did not.

He did right because, *from the training his father had given him, he had a high esteem for prophets of God.* He had seen his father entertain prophets with great honour, and he did not like to despise them. There is many a young man, nowadays, who has great regard for God's ministers, though he is not himself a

Christian. He recollects the times when they used to be at his father's house, when they slept in the prophet's chamber. He remembers many happy evenings he had, as a boy, when they were guests at his home, and he could not bring his mind to despise them, and to make a jest of what they say. Nay, to some extent, he gives heed to what they have to say, and he tries to shape his moral character according to their teaching, yet he does not yield himself to Christ, so nothing comes of it all.

If it had been a prophet of Baal who had come to him, I am afraid that Rehoboam would have done just what he told him to do, and there are many young men now, who appear to be excellent, simply because they are in good hands; but if they had been under the influence of evil men, they would have been as bad as could be, for they have no individuality, they have no heart in doing the right thing. It is well to come to the house of God, my dear friends, but I like to see people come because they want to come. I observe some people, even on the Sabbath, walking along to their place of worship, with their books under their arm in a most solemn manner, and all the while looking as if they were going to be flogged; and when they come out, they look just as if they had passed through that experience. I like to see people go tripping to God's house with sacred joy, as if it was the merriest place in all the world. When I come into the Tabernacle, I often repeat those lines by Dr. Watts,—

> "Peace be within this sacred place,
> And joy a constant guest!
> With holy gifts, and heavenly grace,
> Be her attendants blest!
>
> "My soul shall pray for Zion still,
> While life or breath remains;
> There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
> There God my Saviour reigns."

It is well to worship the Lord heartily, with a zest, with holy fervour, to do it because you like to do it, and take a delight in it. It is one thing to be right in appearance, and another thing to be right in your soul. "But," says one, "I thought it was best to do right when you do not like to do it; I thought there was something very meritorious if a person was religious though he could not endure it." No; that is hypocrisy, and nothing else. When a person puts on the garb of religion, all the while feeling that he would gladly take it off if he could,—pretending to be a Christian, when, if he could have his own way, he would have a Continental Sabbath, he is nothing but a hypocrite. When he does get his own way, he manages to have his Continental Sabbath, and he just amuses himself all that he possibly can on God's holy day. No matter what the foreigners do, he is among them in the very thick of it, and he thinks they have a very blessed kind of Sunday. When he is at home, he does not do such naughty things;—oh, no, certainly not! And this hypocrisy is what you think is virtue?

Because you do not like true godliness, you think it must be good for you to pretend to imitate it; but that will never do. The psalmist rightly says, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." He is the man who runs in the way of God's commandments with intense delight; but this Rehoboam did not do so. When he was doing right, he did it because he felt some respect for the prophet, but that was all.

It was soon evident that his heart was not right towards God, for *he imitated his father Solomon in his faults.* His father's great fault was the multiplication of wives, and into this evil Rehoboam fell. And, moreover, all the strength of Rehoboam's heart and soul went in what was a very proper direction in itself; namely, in the building of cities, and the storing of them with provisions, and fencing and garrisoning the towns; yet that direction was a very bad one because it took him away from God. I like to see a young man, whatever he does, throw his whole soul into it; but not so act that he throws his soul away from God by it. There was some force in what the first of the Rothschilds is reported to have said, when he had been making money. Someone said to him, "You are bringing up your sons to make money, I suppose?" He answered, "Of course I am; what should they do else?" "But, still," said the other, "I am sure that you must wish them to look to something higher, and something better." "No," he replied, "I do nothing of the kind. If a man wants to make money, he must give his heart and his soul to it; and that is what these young men have to do, and they must not have their minds distracted from the one pursuit they have in life, namely, to make money, or else they will never succeed at it." I have no doubt there is much truth in that remark, which applies also to higher things. There is such a little real force in man, at his best, that he must put all of it into one thing if he is to have success in it. So this Rehoboam put his whole soul into one thing; and, therefore, "he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;" but prepared his heart to seek after other things.

"But," someone asks, "may not a man be attentive to business?" He ought to be; he should be diligent in business, but ever with this higher motive outreaching everything else, that he may win Christ, and be found in him,—that his life may bring glory to the God who made him, and to the Christ who redeemed him with his precious blood. But, oh, young man, if you do not prepare your heart to seek the Lord, if what you do, that is good, is done in a happy-go-lucky style, if you are good because you happen to be in a good connection, and you keep right because Christian people round about you keep you right, and you would not like to grieve your father, and vex your friend, then there is nothing in it at all. You will go to the bad, one of these days, when you get into other circumstances, and meet with new temptations. A man ought not to live depending upon somebody else's backbone; he should have one of his own; and if he has not, one of these days he will be crushed. If you profess to be a Christian, throw your whole

soul into it, and say, "Let others do as they will, as for me, I will serve the Lord, and not feel it a bondage, but take a delight in it, and I will serve him with all my heart."

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known."

III. There is a third point about Rehoboam, contained in the words of our text, "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;" that is, HE WAS NOT FIXED AND PERSEVERING IN HIS RELIGION. The original bears that sense.

He began well, and in the first three years of his reign, the nation worshipped God. I do not suppose that he really did so himself; but, still, he was on that side. He was one of the Evangelical party; he was one of the God-fearing party, and therefore he prospered. His apparent reverence for God brought the Levites to live in his dominions, and brought others of the best people of Israel to come there, and to strengthen his hands. Thus he prospered; and you might have thought that, as his religion brought him prosperity, he would stick to it. Not he; there was no "stick to it" in him.

As soon as ever he prospered, *he began to grow proud.* He was a fine fellow, he had a splendid kingdom, a very attractive dominion; did not the good people all come there? So, growing proud, he began to forsake the Lord; and the people, following his evil example, worshipped in groves instead of coming to the temple at Jerusalem. Worse than that, they set up graven images and idolatrous pillars, and their heart went aside from God, and they practised the most accursed sin that ever stained and defiled the face of the earth. You know the sin for which God sent the judgment of fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah; and there were some of these people who thus sinned, making an act of worship out of the most bestial crime. Yet Rehoboam did not trouble himself about that. When the people feared God, he was willing that they should do so; and now, if they followed Ashtaroth, they might do as they liked. He was, after all, but a young ruler, who thought that the principal business of a king was to enjoy himself; so he let things go just as they could. He was king; but, still,—well, if God was good, it was proper for good people to reverence him; but if other people did not, he did not trouble his head much about that matter, it sat very lightly upon him.

In consequence of this, *God brought up Shishak from Egypt*, with multitudes of chariots and horsemen, and an innumerable host of people. Then were the Jews in a state of great alarm; and Rehoboam, who went to be moulded any way,—for he had a sort of india-rubber heart,—humbled himself, and the princes of Israel humbled themselves. God knew that these other people were sincere in humbling themselves, so he allowed their sincerity to season the whole bulk, and he therefore accepted the humiliation of king and people, and delivered them.

You see how readily Rehoboam went, first towards God, then towards idols, and then back again towards God; *he was always ready to shift and change.* He wrought no great reforms in the land; we do not read that he held a great passover, as Hezekiah did, or that the high places were taken away; but, as soon as Shishak was gone, he felt perfectly content. There was not anything real and permanent in his religion; it did not hold him. He held it sometimes, but it never held him.

O dear friends, is not this Rehoboam a specimen of a great many people who are living now? They get into a warm-hearted meeting, and they feel the power of it; they meet a friend, and he takes them into different society altogether, where there are merry songs and plentiful jokes, and they feel the power of that. They hold with the hare, and they run with the hounds. They are "everything by starts, and nothing long;" and the result is that they do evil; for, when a man is not fixed in his resolve to do good,—when he does not take his stand, in the name of God, with a life and death determination, it is not doubtful which way he will go.

IV. The last point involved in this description of Rehoboam is this, HE HAD NO CARE ABOUT SERVING GOD.

He did not care whether he served the Lord or not; and as to serving him in a right spirit, that never entered into his head. He never "prepared his heart." If he went to a service,—well, he was there, but that was all. Some people, who have come here to-night, never thought of breathing a prayer before they came, nor after they entered the building. They would even venture, if we allowed them, to partake of the communion at the Lord's table without self-examination and without prayer; they do everything without any preparation of the heart.

But look you, sirs, *if there is no care about making the heart go right, it must go wrong,* because the natural tendency of our mind is toward evil. If you leave your heart to follow its own natural impulse, it is impossible that it should seek the Lord. It is only when it is prepared to seek the Lord that it ever seeks him, and that preparation of the heart is from God; so that, if we do not ask the Lord to prepare our hearts to seek him, we shall never seek his face at all.

And look ye yet again, *all the current in which we are found runs the wrong way;* so that, if there is no preparation of the heart, we know which way it will go. Company will draw it, not towards right, but towards wrong; and the set of the age—the general current of the period—is not towards God, but away from him. If you put a barge in the middle of the river, I know which way it will go; it will go with the tide. It is only by adjusting the rudder, and by wise steering, and hard rowing, that it could be made to go against it. So, if your heart is not prepared to seek the Lord, it will not seek him, it is sure to go in the other direction.

What is preparing the heart to seek the Lord? I should say that it is something like this.

First, *to feel my need of God.* What can I, a creature, do without

my Creator? What can I do without a Father in heaven? I have offended him, I have sinned against him, I have gone far away from him; but I want him to forgive me, and to save me. We must be conscious of this need; may the Spirit of God prepare us to seek the Lord by giving us a deep sense of our desperate need of God's mercy!

The next thing is, *to cry unto God for help:* "Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner! Renew my heart, change my nature, subdue my stubborn will, and make me thy child!" Prayer prepares the heart to seek the Lord, and you will never seek him if you do not pray to him. In fact, prayer is an essential exercise in seeking the Lord.

Then, further, if we would be prepared to seek the Lord, there must be *a submission of ourselves to his guidance*,—a coming to him, and saying, "Here I am, Lord; make me what I ought to be. I agree to thy commandments; I delight in them, help me to run in them. I yield my proud selfhood, and lay down at thy feet my prejudices and my wilfulness, and ask thee now to guide me in the right way."

There must also be *the acceptance of God's plan of salvation.* He who would live the right kind of life must come to God, and say, "My God, thou savest them that believe; help me to believe. Thou givest eternal life to as many as believe in Jesus Christ, thy Son. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." This is the true way of preparing the heart to seek the Lord.

And even when that faith is given, the right preparation is *to serve God always with thoughtfulness and care;*—not to go blundering on anyhow, hit or miss, as some do. It is a terribly sad thing to pretend to serve God without thought, without watchfulness, without care, for God is not such an one that we may rush into his presence whenever we like, without premeditation, solemnity, or reverence. If you were to go to visit a king, you must be prepared to enter the royal presence under court regulations, and to behave yourself in a seemly manner; and much more is this necessary when we seek the Lord. Every holy duty ought to be thought over carefully. Every prayer, every almsgiving, every attempt to serve God, should be done with due consideration, and with holy anxiety to do it in the right manner, at the right time, and in the right spirit.

Now, because Rehoboam did not act thus, and did not, indeed, care to trouble his brain about such things as this, "he did evil." And if any man here says, "Well, I do not trouble about religion; I believe I shall be all right. I cannot be always sitting down, and pulling a long face, and reading the Bible, and trying to find out how I am to live. I just take the first chance that comes, and do the best I can." If you talk like that, you will do evil as surely as you are a man, for he who devotes not his whole soul to fighting the battle of life will certainly lose it. To go to heaven is not such an easy matter that every fool may do it before breakfast. It is a thing which, as it needed the blood of the Son of God to pave the way, and needed the eternal Spirit himself to give us life to run

in that way, is a matter of serious import and of solemn moment; and the whole heart, and soul, and strength must be set upon the attainment of eternal life, or we shall not secure it. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." So, may God the Holy Ghost help you to think seriously about divine things, or else you will do evil because you prepared not your heart to seek the Lord.

Now I want just two or three minutes more in order to make an application of my subject; and, first, dear friends, is it not possible—I want to whisper this round among the members of this church,—is it not quite possible that there may be some nominal professors who come under the description in the text? Their conduct appears to be admirable, and hitherto probably has been so; but they have never prepared their heart to seek the Lord. I fear that, in all our churches, there are people who are called Christians simply because they were brought up among Christians. They need to be brought down, to be converted, regenerated, born again, for they have only been born after the flesh.

There was an Ishmael in the household of Abraham, so we need not wonder if there are such people in all our churches. They have never prepared their hearts to seek the Lord; it has not been heart-work with them. Perhaps conscience sometimes says to them, "Is it not a pity that you ever joined the church?" Now I know who will take this question home, and fret over it; it is you good creatures for whom I do not mean it; but those to whom it specially applies will say, "Oh, he cannot mean me!" There are, alas! many such people; and they are hardly likely to be converted now, because they entered the church before they were converted; and, consequently, whatever is said, they think, "He cannot mean me." But, my dear friend, we do mean the very person who says, "He cannot mean me;" and we do not mean some of those who take home those searching questions, and are troubled by them. Whenever anybody says to me, "Oh, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!" I do not think he really is one. I never knew one, who was really a hypocrite, who was afraid he was one; those who are so truly usually have no such fear. Still, it will be well for each of us to ask these questions, "Is my heart prepared to seek the Lord? Is my heart in my religion? Do I try to serve God with all my heart? Do I make it a matter of serious thought, or is my religion all upon the outside?" If it be so, the probability is that, one of these days, there will come a sudden temptation to you, and over you will go. I have known ministers, deacons, and elders,—grey old men,—fall into sins which one would have thought only silly boys would fall into: and we can only think, when we see such men apostatize, that they never prepared their heart to seek the Lord. Their religion was only skin-deep; it was not that true Christianity which has its root in the soul by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.

Now another question. Are there any young men here, who are very hopeful and promising characters, who like religious gatherings, and attend to everything that is of good repute, and

yet have not sought and found the Lord? Shall I tell you what troubled me before I gave my heart to Christ? It was something which had great influence upon me in bringing me to decision. There was a boy at school, who was some few years older than I was; and he was a very excellent lad. My father (you know that fathers speak thus sometimes,) used to tell me he wished I was half as good as that boy was; he was a kind of pattern lad. Well, he grew up, and came to London to a drapery establishment. He wrote home most delightful letters to his mother, telling her that he was going to hear such-and-such a minister on Sunday morning, and such another one on Sunday evening; and I used to hear what a good lad he was. All of a sudden he came home; he could not be kept in the establishment, there was money missing, and he was suspected of stealing it. He had not been to those places of worship at all; he had spent his Sundays—well, Satan knew where; he had been as bad as bad could be all the while he was there. My father never mentioned him to me any more, but I distinctly recollect feeling just this, "Well, if So-and-so, whom I thought and believed, and who seemed to be such a good lad, to whom I used to look up, has turned out such a downright scamp, may not I do the same?" It seemed to me that, if I did not begin in a better way than he did, by really getting a new heart and a right spirit, I might come morally to the same sort of smash as he did. And I may further tell you that, among the things that led me to Christ, was the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. I heard that he would keep the feet of his saints, and I said to myself, "Then, if I give myself to him, he will ensure the preservation of my character, and he will keep me to the end." And the only bargain I ever made with him, when I gave myself up to him, was that he would ever have me in his holy keeping. O young men, I can recommend that plan to you! I earnestly entreat you not to commence life even with the best moral resolutions. Go straight away to the Lord Jesus, and ask him to grant you grace that you may give yourself up wholly to him. You cannot keep yourself, but he can keep you, and he will keep you even unto the end, for he hath said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Lastly, do I address anyone,—old or young, it is no matter,—who, like Rehoboam, has not sought the Lord, and like Rehoboam has got into a world of trouble through it? Have you lost the ten tribes? Has Shishak come against you? You did wrong, you know you did, for you forsook your God; and now, after that, do you still refuse to seek him? For, mark you, Rehoboam did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord even after he had been attacked by the king of Egypt. Chastisements are lost upon some people; there is someone of Rehoboam's sort here to-night; it is the first time he has been out since his serious illness. Blessed be God that you did not die then, my friend. You know what the angels heard you say when you were lying on your bed. "Please God,

if I am ever raised up from this illness, I will seek the Lord." That is partly the reason why you are here, and I am very glad to see you; but you must not think that coming here will save you. It is no use seeking the Tabernacle; you must seek the Lord. Oh, do not, I pray you, let this warning be neglected, nor let the vow that was registered in heaven be forgotten; but do seek the Saviour with all your heart! And you, my friend, over yonder, were in a shipwreck; there were many lives lost, and you had been a swearing fellow, but you said, "Please God I get ashore, I will turn over a new leaf." Well, I do not think the new leaf is much improvement on the old one. That was not what you meant, was it? It was that you would become a better man if you were saved from the jaws of hell. You were saved from the watery grave, yet you have not prepared your heart to seek the Lord. O my dear friend, God does not send Shishak many times, you know! After he has sent him once, and there is no softening of the heart, or girding up of the loins to seek him, he will send another messenger, and it will be written of you, as it was of Rehoboam, "He slept with his fathers, and his son reigned in his stead." But where was Rehoboam? He never sought the Lord; so, perhaps, when he had passed out of this world, where he had shilly-shallied and vacillated, where he had been pliable and plastic to every influence,—when he passed into the next world, there was realized by him the terror of that dreadful curse, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Then was fulfilled to him that other terrible prophecy, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Think of God's laughing and mocking at a soul that has passed into eternity without him; it is a most dreadful thing, whatever it may mean, and it will be fulfilled in you,—you hopeful people, you plausible people, you undecided people, unless you prepare your heart to seek the Lord. It may be that some of you are standing, at this moment, on the very verge of everlasting life; and if the devil can keep you there he will be perfectly satisfied, for you will perish if you remain there. Do not satisfy him, I implore you. O mighty grace, come upon them now, and make them each one say, "I will stand here no longer; I will cross the line; I will give myself up once for all to Jesus." That is right, young man, cross the river, burn the bridges, sink your boats, and say,—

> "'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
> He drew me, and I follow'd on,
> Charm'd to confess the voice divine."

The Lord make it so, for Christ's sake! **Amen.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—575, 662, 658.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A DOOR OF HOPE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 27TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, in the autumn of 1859.

"The valley of Achor for a door of hope."—Hosea ii. 15.

A CHRISTIAN must walk by faith; not by sight. The way to heaven is not one which is to be trodden by the carnal foot of the man who must see before he can believe. It is a dark way to those who have not the eyes of faith; it is a way through the air, utterly inaccessible to those who have not faith's wings; it is a way upward, quite impassable to the man who has not faith's ladder. The way through this world, under the guardianship of God, and upward to the eternal home of the faithful, is by faith, and not by sight. Yet, nevertheless, the Lord is pleased to humour our weakness and our frailties,—albeit that we should be quite as safe if we had to walk in the dark, by faith, as we are when we walk in the light of the supernatural inward sight of faith, still seeing a light brighter than that which glistens around us;—yet it does please God to give us, in this wilderness, comfortable tokens and sure evidences, by which we are enabled to understand, even by reason, and judgment, and sense, that we are his reconciled people. When God withholds the presence of his comforting Spirit, or when the sunlight of his countenance is taken from us, we are, nevertheless, quite safe, for then we are enabled to cling to Christ in the dark with the arms of faith; but God often gives us more than is absolutely necessary; he gives us glimpses of heaven while here below, and rich spiritual enjoyment while we are in this otherwise barren land.

Now, on the present occasion, we have to speak, not of the meal on which faith necessarily feeds, but of a luxury, a dainty, a kind of celestial dessert which faith feeds upon, not so much for her nourishing, as for her delight. If the children of Israel in the wilderness had manna for their necessities, they also had quails for their satisfaction and delight. Now God gives us, in the presence of his Son, the manna of heaven; in the finished work and spotless righteousness of Jesus, he gives our faith its solid and substantial food; but here, in these vineyards,—in these gardens which we enter

through the doors of hope,—he gives to faith its fragrant spices and its clusters of grapes of Eshcol, which, as they come in contact with the spiritual palate, cause faith to leap for very joy.

What is this which, in our text, is called "a door of hope"? I think it may be understood in four ways. There is, sometimes, a greater embarrassment in the richness of Scripture than in its poverty. In fact, there can be no poverty in any text. I have sometimes heard a complaint made, by one who was studying a sermon, that there was not much in the text. I have generally to complain that there is far more in the text than I can possibly bring out; and so, in this one, there seem to be four interpretations, each of which has a host of commentators to back it; and, as I am incapable of judging which is the best, I will give you all four, and you shall take your choice.

If you read attentively the history of the coming of the children of Israel into Canaan, you will see that the valley of Achor was the first spot on which they settled. Just at the time when they were close to Jericho, they pitched their tents in the valley of Achor. It was there for the first time that they ate the old corn of the land, and it was in that plain that the manna ceased to fall, because there was no further necessity for it. They had entered into Canaan itself, and this valley was their first possession.

I. Now I take it that, by the valley of Achor, in this text, you and I may understand OUR FIRST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS.

We remember—and we can never forget—the time when we were going through the wilderness, seeking rest, and finding none; looking after some substantial city which had foundations, in which our unquiet spirits might find repose; cheered now and then, in that season of conviction of sin, by heavenly manna secretly given,—not to feed us by the lips of enjoyment, but secretly given simply for our support, while we were seeking something higher, something better, —even our heavenly inheritance. We remember well how, with weary feet, we trod the hot sand, with the scorching sun above us, and found no place where we might rest, and permanently take shelter. Well do we recollect the hour when we passed through Jordan, when the Spirit of God led us to the blood of Christ; we were brought to see his finished work upon the cross, his spotless righteousness in his glorious life, and then, laying hold upon him, and believing in him, we understood the meaning of the apostle's declaration, "We which have believed do enter into rest." We had come to Canaan,—to the goodly land which flowed with milk and honey.

And, my brethren, if the wilderness is still fresh in our memory, even more so is that valley of Achor, where we did feed and lie down. Oh, the raptures of that season when I first knew the Lord! My lips will utterly fail to tell out the bliss of that hour when my spirit first cast itself upon Christ. John Bunyan describes his pilgrim as giving three leaps at the cross; but I must claim at least three hundred for my share. How did I leap for joy of heart and lightness of spirit! My sins were gone, buried in the sepulchre of Christ, washed away by the river of his blood; and I stood "accepted in the

Beloved." Was I not like the prodigal in that hour when his father's arms were about his neck, when the sound of music and dancing was in his ears, and the fatted calf was spread before him as a dainty feast,—the token of his father's affection? Surely, at that day, we went out with joy, and were led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills did break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Do you not remember how sweet your Sabbaths were then, how rich was every hymn, how precious was every prayer? There was not a text of Scripture which was not helpful to you. As for your times of seclusion, your hours of private prayer, were they not as the days of heaven upon earth? No human penman can describe the heavenly rapture; no banqueting-house could equal that, except it be that heavenly banquet of which the spouse singeth so sweetly in her song of love.

"But," you say, "in what way can these early enjoyments be considered to be a door of hope? They are like the valley of Achor, it is true; but how are they a door of hope?" Why, they are a door of hope to us in the time when we are enjoying them, for then it is we can exclaim, "Surely I am reconciled to God, or else he would not treat me thus. Would he put his lips to my lips, and kiss me with the kisses of his love, if I were not reconciled to him? Is it possible I should feel his arms about my neck, and sit at his table, and be called his child, if I were still his enemy, and my sins were still uncancelled?" The first transports of bliss, the first enjoyments after conversion, are like golden doors of hope to those who have just escaped from under the lash of the law, and have been delivered from their sins. Surely, all of you, who are in that state, can say they are doors of hope to you; for, looking back upon your past misery, you say to yourself, "If I were not one of his children, could I be thus? If he had not accepted me in the Beloved, if he had not taken me to himself for ever, whence could come this rapture, this transport, this delight?"

They are, therefore, truly doors of hope to you, in this sense, that as, when the children of Israel took possession of the valley of Achor, they did, virtually, take possession of the whole promised land, so you may have had some first enjoyments, which are, in truth, but an earnest of complete and unspeakable felicity. There was an old English custom by which a man took possession of an estate "by turf and twig." A sod of the turf and a twig from a tree were given to him. It was a token that the whole estate, with everything which grew upon it, was his property. And so, when Jesus whispered into your ear, and gave you the assurance of reconciliation with the Father, and fellowship with himself, he did, as it were, give you the whole land of promise. The richest enjoyment of the believer is yours. You have the foretaste, and that is the pledge that you shall yet enter into the possession of the whole. However great the promise, however rich may be its treasure, it is all yours. You have not yet fed upon the clusters of its vineyards, but it is all yours; because, in taking possession of your first enjoyment, you have virtually claimed the whole. It was said of Cæsar, when he

landed here, that he stumbled; but, clutching a handful of earth, he hailed it as a happy omen, saying that, in taking possession of that handful of earth, he had taken all England for his own. And you, who, on your bended knees fell prostrate before God, in that first rich treasure of joy, which came into your souls, you took possession of all the inheritance of the saints on earth, and of their inheritance in heaven, too.

Further, I must add that, in looking back to these first enjoyments, they are a door of hope to you, ye aged ones, who can talk of these days long gone by; and to others of us, who can look back some ten, twelve, or twenty years, when first we were quickened by the Spirit, and taught to know the Saviour's preciousness. To all such, these early enjoyments are still doors of hope. I would not have you feed on experience long gone by; such bread may be mouldy; but yet, methinks, sometimes, there is a way of storing up that old manna, in the golden pot of recollection, in such a way that it remaineth sweet even to this day. I know that I have, sometimes, when doubting my interest in Christ, been led to look back to that first season of fellowship with Jesus, and to say,—

> "What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
> How sweet their memory still!"

And though this stale provision would not do to feed upon constantly, yet, as an old Puritan says, "When there is nothing else in the cupboard, this cold meat, that has been left from yesternight, must satisfy us for a little while, until we get some fresh food direct from heaven." We may get some new experience from past enjoyments. You see the lightermen and bargemen; they lean backwards to press forwards. Some lazy people lean backwards, and never come forward at all; but we may use our experience as the long poles of these men are used; and as we walk backwards and push backwards in recollection, we may be really going forward in faith, and in hope, and in love. This we may do, and so these early experiences—these loves of our espousals—these early breakfastings in the vineyard with our Beloved—these days of early fellowship and sweet acquaintance—may become as doors of hope to our poor troubled spirits. I have thus endeavoured to explain the first meaning of the text; may God make your early spiritual enjoyments to be doors of hope to you!

II. But, again, the valley of Achor is declared by the Rabbis to have been a most fertile plain. Some commentators, of great judgment and discernment, declare that the valley of Achor is identical with the valley of Eshcol, while they are all agreed upon this point, —that Achor was one of the richest and fattest valleys of the whole promised land. Wherever you might walk within it, there was not a single barren spot. It was all fertile, bringing forth vines and grapes of the very richest kind, so that the wine that came therefrom was noted above every other.

And, my brethren, may not the valley of Achor represent to you and me, not only our early enjoyments, but THOSE VERY SWEET AND MEMORABLE SEASONS WHICH WE HAVE HAD SINCE THEN? For Christians,

though they have long Lents, do have happy Easters. They may sometimes have forty days of fasting; but one day of such feasting as God's children have is quite enough to make them forget all this, and go fasting forty days more, and yet not hunger. There are some days when God's children are satisfied with fatness, and so satisfied that they have not only all that heart could wish, but their cup runneth over; and they can do nothing but sit down in astonishment, in a very repletion of satisfaction,—content to sing, and so to pour out their souls in gratitude before God. Oh, ye who think that religion is a dull, dry, dreary thing, whence have you got this idea? Perhaps you have derived it from the long-visaged Pharisee; it may be that you have acquired this falsehood from the hypocrite; but from the real Christian, I trow that ye have had very little that will lead to such a conclusion as that.

We are a tried people; we have our troubles, and griefs, and woes; but we are a happy people, and never spake prophet more truly than when he said, "Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." We have not only times of quiet calm and deep serenity, when our peace is like a river, and our righteousness is like the waves of the sea; but we have times when our joy exceedeth all description, when the river swelleth to its utmost bank, and, running over, covers the green pastures of our life, and fattens them for many a future day with its rich deposits of grace. We have sometimes had very tempests of delight, when our leaping spirits could scarcely stay within our body, and when, in a very transport, we have said, with Paul, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth." In the breaking of bread at the communion table, in coming together in our frequent meetings for prayer, in our silent meditations, and in the reading of the Scriptures, our Master has appeared to us; he has taken us by the hand, and our hearts have burned within us while he has talked with us by the way. At such moments, we have been full of heaven; and if not actually inside the pearly gates, we have certainly stood just this side of them, and the gates have seemed to be wide open, and nothing to divide us from heaven except the infirmity and weakness of our nature.

Think it not a fable I am telling you, it is a sober fact; there are red-letter days in our diary. Some among us, who appear frequently with mournful faces, nevertheless could tell you of days when the light of the sun has been as the light of seven days; and as for the light of the moon, it has been as the light of the sun to them. Their meditation concerning Christ has been sweet and rapturous. He has taken them, as on eagle's wings, and carried them up to the very heaven of delight, where they have beheld Christ, and have been able to say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

These enjoyments are doors of hope. The fat valley of Achor is a door of hope, but in these respects certainly you will perceive it is so. The believer, after his joyous frames of mind, often has a season of sadness; and then these bright experiences become doors of hope, for he says, "I am sadly changed, but God has not. Did he manifest himself to me yesterday? He is just the same to-day as he was

then." The faithfulness of God, combined with our recollection of his kindness to us, compels us to draw the inference that he is still good, that he is still rich in mercy and full of lovingkindness. And so the old experiences, coupled with our belief in God's immutability, become doors of hope to us.

Besides, they are doors of hope in this respect; for we argue thus,—Did he once shine upon me? Then he is mine for ever, and he will shine upon me again. 'Tis true, I have not seen the sun for many days; but he did shine once, and he is shining now, and I shall see him yet again. 'Tis true, I see no sun, nor moon, nor stars; but the sun and moon and stars are not quenched by the tempest of our trouble, I shall see them again. Yes, I shall behold his face in righteousness. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God?" Though he give trouble, yet will he give peace; though he kill, he will yet make alive; the third day he will raise me up, and I shall again live in his sight.

So, you see, the rich enjoyments, the transports, the raptures, the delights, the ecstasies of believers become doors of hope to them, when many other doors are shut. Now, believer, turn back to your experience, and see if you cannot make it to be a door of hope to you. Are you now distrustful and desponding? Then, think of "his love in time past;" and, surely, it will—

"Forbid you to think
He'll leave you at last in trouble to sink."

Turn back to your Ebenezers, those golden waymarks on the road to heaven. Canst thou, believer, sit down by the side of one of those stones of help, and then despair? Or canst thou remember the days of old, the years of former times, when thy God sent from above, and took thee, and brought thee up out of many waters; and dost thou believe that he has brought thee thus far to put thee to shame? If he had intended to destroy thee, would he have shown such kindness to thee as this? Would all these banquets have been given to a foe? Would the King have brought thee to his house of wine if he had not intended to bring thee in to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Thus may past experiences be doors of hope; but do not depend upon them, for Christ must still come through them to you; and though it be a door of hope, what is the good of that door if it be fast locked? You must get at Christ through the door; it must be your door of consolation, for it is through this that you are helped to find him.

III. So far the matter has been simple enough; but now, in the third place, the valley of Achor, you will all recollect as a matter of history, was the place where Achan was stoned. All the spoils of Jericho were dedicated to the Lord, but Achan had taken a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and had hidden them in his tent. He was discovered by God's providence, and was brought out, and stoned to death and burned in the valley of Achor, and therefore it is called by that name to this day.

Now, do you not see how this may be turned to spiritual account? THE PLACE WHERE THE CHRISTIAN MORTIFIES HIS SIN SHALL BECOME TO HIM A VALLEY OF HOPE. You and I have our Achans in the camp. I have had to stone a host of them already, and I lament that the evil family is not yet cut in pieces; there still remain some of the sons of Achan. Would to God I could burn them all! There was a time, my brother, when your Achan was so strong that you would not give heed to that gospel which lays the sinner low, and gives all the glory to God. But you were compelled to bring it out, and you did; you cast it out, you stoned it, you burned it with fire, and now you are to be numbered among the humble in Zion. But this day you are still distressed, and you say, "How is it I am still afflicted? I have been trying to do good; I can do but little for my Master; truly, there must still be some accursed thing in my camp."

Perhaps it may be worldliness,—the common Achan of our churches. Possibly, it is covetousness; a common sin, that is seldom admitted. It is a singular thing that Francis de Sales, a noted confessor of the Romish Church, said he had met with many who confessed to the commission of the most abominable sins, but not one who ever confessed covetousness. It is an Achan hard to find out, for the man, who is worldly, says he is industrious; and he who is griping, and who grinds the poor, says he is only diligent in business, and, doubtless, fervent in spirit somewhere or other, but you cannot find out where it is. Look and see whether this is your Achan; if so, bring it out, and stone it. By your contributions to the poor, drain the life-blood from your avarice, and make it turn sickly and pale; let it die, and burn it, and bury it. And if that be not the sin, seek it out, whatever it is, and bring it out, and let it die; for, depend upon it, the place of mortification of sin is the place of the comfort of the soul. If thou wilt be at friendship with but one traitor, God will not give thee the comforting light of his countenance. Bring forth the idol out of thine house; make Rachel rise, and search even the camel's furniture, lest the idol be hidden there. Bring it out, and let it be utterly destroyed before the face of the Lord thy God, for he is a jealous God, and he will not let thee serve another, nor give thy love unto strangers; or else he will hedge up thy way with thorns, and chastise thee with whips of scorpions, till he brings thee back to the simplicity of thy consecration to him.

It is a high and noble thing when a man knows how to mortify sin. The old Romish pretended saints had a very curious way of doing this. For instance, they mortified their bodies by not cleaning and washing themselves, and by wearing their garments till they were full of vermin; they thus thought themselves holy. I am sorry to say we have many such saints in our time; I wish we could find them out, and spoil them by a good bath. A thorough washing would not be discreditable to God, while it would be exceedingly healthful to man. Moreover, we have read of some other saints, who would eat nothing but dry bread sprinkled with ashes, during Lent. They thought that, while they mortified their bodies, they pleased God, and did not understand that their lusts and pride might be fattening while their poor bodies might be starving; for what they

lose in one way they gain in the other, until their souls are like Jeshurun, they wax fat and kick. It is in mortifying our evil passions, our lustful desires, our wrong thoughts, our intemperance, our seeking too much after the things of this world, our abstaining even from pleasure which we think allowable in itself, and a humbling of our pride before God,—it is this which is such a valley of Achor as shall be a door of hope to us.

I believe many of our distresses, many of our doubts and fears, arise from our Achans. I may be giving you the most comforting advice if I urge you to search yourselves, and examine yourselves, and turn out the accursed thing. Let it die, destroy it; seek to be conformed to the image of Christ. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds; put away every evil thing from you, and then put on, as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, humbleness of mind, and all those things whereby the child of God shall be adorned and beautified; so shall the valley of Achor become a door of hope to you. I shall not explain how it will be so; you will find that out for yourselves better than I can tell you. Go and try it, and you will soon discover that the mortification of sin is the gladdening of the soul.

IV. The last interpretation is one closely connected with this. The valley of Achor was so called from a word which signifies TROUBLE, doubtless because Achan there troubled Israel. "Why hast thou troubled us?" asked Joshua; "the Lord shall trouble thee this day;" and therefore they called it the valley of Achor, that is, the valley of trouble.

"Oh!" says one, "I am glad the valley of trouble is a door of hope." But stop! What trouble was it? It was trouble on account of sin. There is some trouble which is not a door of hope at all. There are some troubles into which men thrust themselves, and they may get out of them as best they can. Trials do not prove a man to be a Christian. There is a way to hell "through much tribulation," as well as a way to heaven through "the strait gate." We may go to hell in the sweat of our brow. We may go from one evil to a greater, from the sparks into the midst of the fire. The trouble here intended is trouble on account of sin, and that valley of trouble is a door of hope. My friends, I speak earnestly and pointedly. There are some, here present, in whose hearts the Lord has been at work. You are now in great trouble on account of your sins. You were once peaceable and happy enough in your own hearts; you loved the ways of sin, and you little thought of the wages that would follow. You were delighted enough to dance your merry round with the poor foolish worldlings; but now you are startled and amazed to discover your mistake. You find yourself to be a lost soul; sin follows behind you with terrible howling. You discover that you can by no means quiet your clamorous iniquities, which have been demanding your death. You have been lately crying to God for mercy, but the mercy has not as yet come; at least, you are not conscious of it. Your trouble has been waxing worse and worse, and, as David said, your sore runs in the night, and it ceaseth not; you make your very bed to swim, while your

tears become your meat day and night. If any should ask you if you are a child of God, you would say, "Certainly not,—would that I were!" You are told to believe in Christ, and you say, "Oh, could I but believe! But it seemeth impossible that there shall be salvation for such a sinner as I am. I am the very chief of sinners; and the worst of my case is, that I do not feel this as I ought to feel it. I am hardened and careless, although I mourn my hardness and carelessness of sin."

My friend, I am glad to see thee in trouble on account of sin, for this trouble is a door of hope; let me show thee how it is so. It is, in the first place, a door of hope, *because it shows that thou art one whom Christ invites to come to him.* Christ invites the heavy laden,—thou art such an one, so come to him. Thou art one for whom Jesus died; for Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now, thou art consciously a sinner, and rest assured that those he came to save he will save, or else his mission would be a frustrated one. If he came to save sinners, he will save them, and thou art consciously such. I know thou canst set thy hand and seal to this declaration,—

"I a sinner surely am;
Then Jesus died for me."

Then let that valley of Achor be a door of hope to thee. "But," says one, "I feel myself to be condemned, lost, and ruined." That is the reason that thou art to believe God means thee to be saved. Martin Luther used to argue from contradictions and apparent impossibilities. He says, "I will cut thine head off with thine own sword, O Satan! Thou sayest I am condemned; but I tell thee, for that very reason, I shall be saved. Christ came to clothe some; he could not have come to clothe those who were already clothed, he must have come to clothe the naked. I am such an one; then he came to clothe me. Jesus came to wash some; he could not have come to wash those who did not need it, but to wash the filthy. I am filthy, therefore he came to wash me. Christ came to forgive the sinful, to cleanse those who have many iniquities; I am such an one; I claim, therefore, to be one of those for whom his mission was undertaken, and that he came purposely and expressly to save me."

"Oh!" says one, "that is a very narrow door." Is it? Well, it is such a door as I have been content to creep through many and many a time; for when everything else has failed me, I have been obliged to come back to this, that if I am not a saint I am a sinner, and I do humbly confess it. Jesus saith he came to save sinners. I know that; then he came to save me. I clutch the precious truth; and joy and peace return at once.

Come, poor sinner. Dost thou not see this to be a door of hope? It is not *the* hope, but the *door* of it. Christ comes to thee through the door of thy felt necessity and thy conscious distress. If now thou knowest thyself to be lost, ruined, and undone,—if now thy heart grieves on account of its own hardness and obduracy, of which thou dost accuse thyself,—now cast thyself on him who is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

And, besides, there is another door of hope here. If the Lord hath brought thee to feel thy need of a Saviour, *then thou art not dead in trespasses and sins.* Dead men cannot feel. Prick them with a dagger, and they start not; blow out their very brains with a pistol, and there shall be no motion, for they cannot feel. Even though the vital part be touched, they cannot feel the pains and agonies of death; and if thou art conscious of sin,—if thou art seeking the Saviour, there is hope for thee. "But," says one, "I am dead in sin, notwithstanding all." Well, now, a king's ransom for one tear that ever streamed from a dead man's eye! Come now, I challenge thee; I will give thee all this world's wealth if thou wilt bring me some signs of the pulsations of a dead man's heart, or the moving of a dead man's lips. If thou canst bring them to me, then I will give thee leave to despair; but such a thing cannot be. Thy sighs, thy groans, thy tears, thy silent prayers, prove that thou art spiritually alive. From this, take comfort, and make the valley of Achor a door of hope. Let this lead you to remember that, where God has begun a good work, he will carry it on. God always begins to work in a way that looks like undoing, and not doing. When we begin to build, we first dig out before we build up; and so, God digs deep with the spade of conviction, before using the trowel of his grace to build us up unto the edification of his people. We must, my brethren, first of all be slain before we can be made alive; first wounded before we can be healed; nay, we must be buried to self and all self-confidence before we can be quickened to enjoy a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus.

I may be speaking to one who says, "I am convinced that my affliction is a door of hope, but the door is shut." "Ah!" says another, "and my experience is a door of hope, but I cannot open it." "And," says another, "all my mortification of sins should be a door of hope, certainly, but I do not find it a door of hope to me." They are doors of hope, though not always open doors. What is your duty if the door be shut? Your first duty is to wait till it is open. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

In the next place, while you are waiting at the door, worship. Wait with many prayers; wait with many tears; wait with anxiety; wait, believing that God is just and merciful. And while thou art thus waiting, and while the door is shut, let me give you another piece of advice. Cast thine eye up to the lintel, and mark well that this door of hope is a blood-besprinkled door. Look up to that sign that the sacrifice has been offered; and, perhaps, while thou art looking upon the blood on the lintel, the door itself will open. It is a master-key; many have found that, when they have learned to spell the blood, and trust in that, then the door has opened of itself.

But if this fail thee, what next shalt thou do? Why, knock, knock. "But," says one, "I have knocked." Knock again, and keep on knocking, and never cease; though thou art faint, still keep the knocker in thy hand, for to him that asketh it shall be given, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. But, while thou art

waiting outside, and knocking, let me give thee another piece of advice. Clear the door; for, perhaps, thou art like Cain, who was not accepted because sin was at the door. Give up all thy lusts; and when thou hast cleared the door, then knock again, and so continue to knock with a good clear door, and surely it shall soon open. But if it open not, let me bid thee once more comfort thyself by looking through the crevices and the key-hole; for I have known many a poor soul who, when the door has not opened, has looked through the key-hole, and has found comfort, and the door has opened immediately. If thou canst not get a whole promise, get half a promise; if thou canst not get full enjoyment of Christ, touch the hem of his garment; and if thou canst not get the children's bread, be like the Syrophenician woman, and be willing to be a little dog to eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. Whist there! Gently! creep up; look down between the door-sill and the door itself; peep through the key-hole, and see if thou canst not find some comfort from what thou seest within.

But let me give you one more piece of advice,—Keep on knocking; and remember that there is One who has the key of that door. Who is he? The Prince of the house of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth. Who is he? He is nigh thee, wheresoever thou art. If thou wilt believe with all thy heart in the Lord Jesus, and trust him, and repose all thy confidence in him, thou shalt find yon door open straightway. Look not to the rusty key of reason, but to the golden key which he carries at his girdle. Look to him alone, and say to him, "Lord Jesus, I am content to stay here knocking if thou dost not open the door; but I beseech thee, for thy mercy's sake, to let thy poor prisoner in, and let me see the hope which thou hast prepared for thy children."

May it come to pass that you and I, having stood on this side of the door, may soon be seated on the other side of it! While you are on this side, it is a door of hope; on the other side, it is a door of gratitude. If any of you have got inside the door, sing to the praise of him who opened this door, and let you in, and who has given you a feast of good things which he has prepared for all them that love him.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS V. 1—5.

Verse 1. *Therefore—*

The apostle Paul had the logical faculty largely developed, so his writings are full of "therefores." And the Christian religion, as a whole, stands logically connected,—doctrine with doctrine, truth with truth. Error is inconsistent with itself, but truth is consistent, logical, and unerring. "Therefore"—

1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Are you enjoying that peace, dear friend, at this moment? If you are, indeed, justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore, know it,

and feel no disquietude. Draw near to God as a dear child might to a loving father. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"—

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

When a man is at peace with God, then he has the desire to draw near to him. When he is justified, he has the right to draw near; so that, being justified, and having peace, we have "access by faith;" and this is not a transient privilege, but the grace into which we have access is a grace in which we stand. We abide in it; the Lord has given us, through our justification, a permanent standing near to himself. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and this gives us joy,—the joy of sweet hope concerning the bright future that lies before us: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

3. *And not only so,—*

Whenever the apostle begins to talk of the Lord's bounties to his people, he abounds in "also's" and in "not only so's." As if he had not said enough already, when he had reminded us of the joy of hope in God's glory, he says, "And not only so." We have something in possession as well as something to hope for; we have a present glory as well as glory laid up in store: "And not only so,"—

3—5. *But we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Beloved, it is a mark of great grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation, and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord's hands; but it is a sign of a still higher state of grace when we glory in tribulation,—when we welcome it, and say, "Now, the Lord is about to elevate me to the upper class in his school,—to teach me some deeper truths than I have hitherto learned,—to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of his kingdom than I have previously had,—to work in my heart some new grace which has never been there before.

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." You cannot learn to swim on dry land, and you cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience." There are some who think that they will get experience through tribulation. So they do, in a certain sense; but not experience of the right kind. There is a middle term,—patience,—which keeps its right place: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience." I know some people, who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience now than they had when they began; I mean, they are just as foolish,—just as untaught in the things of God,—just as ready as before to blunder into a fresh trouble, because they have lacked that middle term.

Then, further, Paul says, "and experience, hope." Our experience of the Lord's goodness in the past leads us on to hope for still greater things in the future; and, thus, experience worketh hope. I have seen some persons, who were called experienced Christians, in whom it seemed to me that experience had worked despair; for their faces were always very long and very sad, and their speech was as dolorous as it well could be. But here I find that true Christian experience worketh hope,—a hope that "maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"A PREPARED PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 3RD, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 25th, 1879.

"I go to prepare a place for you."—John xiv. 2.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—Colossians i. 12.

MY real text is not in the Bible; it is one of those Christian proverbs, which are not inspired in words, but the spirit of which is inspired, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." You have often heard that sentence; it is familiar in your mouths as household words, and well it may be.

Yet I shall have two texts from the Scriptures; the first will be our Saviour's words to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you," from which we learn that "Heaven is a prepared place;" and the second will be Paul's words to the Colossians, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," from which we learn that there is a prepared people, a people made meet to be partakers of the inheritance which Christ has gone to prepare for them.

I. I am not going to have any further preface, but I will begin at once to speak upon THE PREPARATION OF HEAVEN: "I go to prepare a place for you."

It is many months since I began to turn this sentence over; I think I might truly say that, for several years, I have thought of it, and thought of it again, and thought of it yet again,—that our Lord Jesus Christ, before returning to heaven, should say to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Is there any difficulty about this passage? Yes, it is very difficult to explain; indeed, I do not think that we really can know here all that Christ meant when he uttered these words. A father said to his children, when the summer sun had waxed hot, "I shall go to the seaside to-day, to prepare a place for you." His little child asked, "What does father mean when he says that he will prepare a place for us?" And his mother answered, "My

child, I cannot tell you all that your father means, but you will see when you get there; and, now, it must be enough for you that, although you do not know what father will have to do at the seaside in preparing a place for you, he knows what he is going to do." And, dear friends, there is this consolation for us that, even if we can hardly guess what it is that Christ can find to do to prepare heaven for us, he knows what is wanted, and he knows how to do it; and that is infinitely better than our knowing, because, even if we knew what was needed, we could not do it. But, with Christ, to know and to do are two things that run parallel. He knows that there are certain preparations to be made, he knows what those preparations must be, and he is equal to the task of making them; he has not gone upon an errand which he cannot fulfil; and when we get to heaven, we shall know—perhaps it may take us a long while to find it all out,—but we shall know and discover throughout eternity what he meant when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

I do not profess to be able to explain our Lord's words, but I am going simply to make a few remarks upon them; and, first, I ask you to notice that *heaven is already prepared for Christ's people.* Christ has told us that, when he comes in his glory, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." So, there is an inheritance which the Father has already prepared for the people whom he gave to his Son, and this inheritance is reserved for them. But if it was prepared from the foundation of the world, how can it be said to be prepared by Christ? The explanation probably is, that it was prepared in the eternal purpose of the Father,—prepared by wise forethought,—arranged for,—predestinated,—prepared in that sense,—it was provided, in the eternal arrangements of Jehovah, that there should be a suitable place for his people to dwell in for ever. He made the pavilion of the sun, and he gave the stars their appointed positions; would he forget to prepare a place for his people? He gave to angels their places, and even to fallen spirits he has appointed a prison-house; so he would not forget, when he was arranging the entire universe, that a place would be needed for the twice-born, the heirs of grace, the members of the mystical body of Christ Jesus, his brethren who were to be made like unto him. Therefore, in purpose, and plan, and decree, long ere God had laid the foundations of this poor world, and the morning stars had sung together over creation's six days' work accomplished, he had prepared a place for his people; it was not actually prepared, but it was in the purpose and plan of the eternal mind, and therefore might be regarded as already done.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to heaven, he says, that he may prepare a place for his servants, and we may be helped to form some idea of what he means by this expression if we just think a little about it. And, first, I am sure *that must be a very great and glorious place which needs Christ to prepare it.* If we do not know all that he means, we can get at least this much out of his declara-

tion. He spake this world into being. It was not; but he said, "Be," and it was at once made. Then he spake it into order, into light, into life, into beauty. He had but to speak, and what he willed was done. But now that he is preparing a place for his people, he has gone to heaven on purpose to do it. He used to stand still here on earth, and work miracles; but this was a miracle that he could not perform while he was here. He had to go back to his home above in order to prepare a place for his people. What sort of place, then, must it be that needs Christ himself to prepare it? He might have said, "Angels, garnish a mansion for my beloved." He might have spoken to the firstborn sons of light, and said, "Pile a temple of jewels for my chosen." But, no, he leaves not the work to them; but he says, "I go to prepare a place for you."

Brethren, *he will do it well, for he knows all about us.* He knows what will give us the most happiness,—and what will best develop all our spiritual faculties for ever. He loves us, too, so well that, as the preparing is left to him, I know that he will prepare us nothing second-rate, nothing that could possibly be excelled. We shall have the best of the best, and much of it; we shall have all that even his great heart can give us. Nothing will be stinted; for, as he is preparing it, it will be a right royal and divine preparation. If, when the prodigal came back to his father, there was the preparation of the fatted calf, and the music and dancing, and the gold ring and the best robe, what will be the preparation when we do not come home as prodigals, but as the bride prepared for her husband, or as the beloved children, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, coming home to the Father who shall see his own image in us, and rejoice over us with singing? It is a grand place that Christ prepares, I wot, for never was there another such a lordly host as he is. It is a mansion of delights, I ween, that he prepares, for never was there another architect with thought so magnificent as his, and never were other hands so skilled at quarrying living stones, and putting them one upon another, as his hands have ever been. This thought ought to cheer us much; it must be something very wonderful that Christ prepares as a fit place for his people.

And methinks I may add to this, that *it must be something very sweet when it is prepared.* If you go to a friend's house, and just fall in with the ordinary proceedings of the family, you are very comfortable, and you are glad not to disarrange anything; but if, when you arrive, you see that everything has been done on an extra scale to prepare for your coming, you feel still more grateful. It has often happened to an honoured guest that he could not help observing that he was not being treated as his friends lived every day of the week, and all the year round. That guest-chamber had evidently been newly furnished, and everything that was possible had been thought of to do him honour. If you were treated thus as a guest, there was pleasure for you in the fact that so much had been prepared for you. Did your husband ever take you to a new house, and point out to you how he had purchased everything that

he thought would please you? Had that little room been furnished specially for you, and did he anticipate your tastes, provide this little thing and that that he knew you would like? Well, it was not merely that you enjoyed the things themselves, but they all seemed to you so much sweeter because they had been prepared for you by your beloved. And when you get to heaven, you will be astonished to see this and that and the other joy, that was prepared for you, because Christ thought of you, and provided just what you would most appreciate. You will be no stranger there, beloved; you will say, "There has been here a hand that helped me when I was in distress; there has been here, I know, an eye that saw me when I was wandering far from God; there has been, in this place, a heart that cared for me,—that selfsame heart that loved me, and that bled for me down below upon the cross. It is my Saviour who has prepared this place for me."

I do not know whether I can convey to you all my thoughts upon this theme, but it does seem to me so pleasant to think that we are going to a place where we shall not be the first travellers through the country; but where *a Pioneer has gone before us*,—the best of pioneers, who went before us with this one object in his mind, that he might get all ready, and prepare the place for us. Methinks, brethren, that those who will be there before us will say, when we arrive there, "We are glad you have come, for everything has been prepared for you." It would be an eternal sorrow in heaven if the saints should miss their way, and perish, as some croakingly tell us; for, then, what about the preparations for their reception? They would all have been made in vain;—harps prepared, which no fingers would ever play, and crowns which no heads would ever wear. I do not believe it; I have never dreamed that such a thing could happen. I feel certain that he, who prepared the place for the people, will prepare the people for the place; and that, if he gets all ready for them, he means to bring them home that they may enjoy the things which he hath laid up for them that love him.

I know that I am not explaining the preparation of heaven, yet I hope I am drawing some comfortable thoughts out of the subject. If Christ is preparing heaven, then it will be what our Scotch friends call "a bonny place;" and if it be prepared for us, when we get there, it will exactly fit us, it will be the very heaven we wanted,—a better heaven than we ever dreamed of,—a better heaven than we ever pictured even when our imagination took its loftiest flights,—the heaven of God, and yet a heaven exactly suited to such happy creatures as we then shall be.

Now, however, let us try to come a little closer to the subject, and attempt to explain our Lord's words. Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place for his people; does not this refer, if we keep it to its strict meaning, to *the ultimate place of God's people?* You see, Christ mentions a place, not a state; and he speaks of going to it, and coming back from it: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Christ is speaking of himself in his full manhood, without any figurative meaning to his words. He meant that he

was going, with all his human nature on him, away from this world; and that he was going to prepare a place for us, intending to come again, with all that glorified human nature about him, to receive us unto himself. This does not mean his spiritual coming in death; nor any kind of spiritual coming, as to its first meaning, at any rate. I am persuaded that the clear run of the words involves our Lord's coming, in his second advent, when he will come to receive, not you or me as individuals who, one by one, will enter into rest, but to receive his whole Church into the place which he shall then have prepared for her. After the resurrection, you must remember, we shall need a place to live in,—a literal, material place of abode, for this body of ours will be alive as well as our spirit, and it will need a world to live in, a new heaven and a new earth.

I am not going to enter into any speculations about the matter, but it seems to me clear enough, in this text, that Christ is preparing a place somewhere—not for disembodied spirits, for they are already before the throne of God perfectly blest,—but for the entire manhood of his people, when spirit, soul, and body shall be again united, and the complete man shall receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, and the whole manhood of every believer shall be perfected in the glory of Christ. I do not know what better world, in many respects, there could be than this, so far as material nature is concerned; it is so full of the beauty and loveliness that God pours upon it on every side; it is a wonderful world,—

> "Where every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile;"—

but I could not reconcile myself to the idea that this world would be heaven. No; my thoughts rise far above the loftiest hills, the most flowery meads, the rolling ocean, and the flowing rivers. Earth has not space enough to be our heaven. She has too narrow a bound, and she is too coarse a thing, bright gem though she is, for perfected manhood to possess throughout eternity. It will do well enough for the thousand years of glory, if it shall literally be that we shall reign with Christ upon it during the millennial age; but it is a drossy thing, and if it ever is to be the scene of the new heavens and the new earth, it must first pass through the fire. The very smell of sin is upon it; and God will not use this globe as a vessel unto honour until he has purified it with fire as once he did with water; and then, mayhap, it may serve for this higher purpose; but I scarcely think it will. Even now, Jesus is preparing, and has gone away on purpose to prepare, a place for us; and he will come again, "with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and he will catch his people away, and will bear them to the eternal home where their felicity shall know no end. That is what I suppose to be the meaning of our Lord's words.

"But," perhaps you say to me, "what do you mean by what you have been saying?" I reply,—I do not know to the full; I can but dimly guess at the meaning of what my Lord has said,—that

he is doing something so glorious for all his people that, perhaps, if I did know it, I might not be allowed to tell you; for there are some things which, when a man knows them, it is not lawful for him to utter. Did not Paul see a great deal when he was caught up into Paradise? Yet he has told us very little about it; for there was a finger laid upon his lip, that bade him know it for himself, but not to tell it to others. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" and though he has "revealed them unto us by his Spirit," even the Spirit who searcheth the deep things of God, yet is it not possible for us to tell all that has been revealed to us.

It strikes me that there is some little light to be obtained concerning this preparation of heaven by Christ, if I leave the direct and literal meaning of the words, and think of the future state as a whole rather than in detail. Do you not think, dear friends, that *our Lord Jesus Christ prepares heaven for his people by going there?* I mean this. Supposing you were to be lifted up to a state which was looked upon as heavenly, but that Jesus was not there, it would be no heaven to you. But wherever I may go, when I do go, if Jesus is already there, I do not care where it is. Wherever he is, shall be my heaven; for, as I said in the reading, that is our very first and last thought about heaven, to be with Christ where he is. To be with Christ is far better than to be anywhere else. Well, then, the first thing that Christ had to do, in order to prepare heaven for his people, was to go to heaven, for that made it heaven. Then were heaven's lamps kindled; then did heaven's heralds ring out their supernal melodies; then did the whole of the New Jerusalem seem to be ablaze with a glory brighter than the sun, for "the Lamb is the light thereof." When he comes there, then all is bliss. Do you not see, beloved, that he has prepared heaven by going there? His being there will make it heaven for you, so you need not begin asking what else there will be in heaven. There will be all manner of rare delights to spiritual men, but the chief of them all will be that Jesus is there. As Rowland Hill used to sing, so may you and I comfort ourselves with this thought,—

> "And this I do find,—we two are so joined—
> He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind."

If I may but be where he is, that shall be heaven to me.

But another reflection is this,—that *our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared heaven for his people by the merit of his atonement.* Thus hath he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He rent the veil, and made a way into the holiest of all for all who trust him; but, in addition to that, he perfumed heaven with the fragrance of his sacrifice. If heaven be the place of the Godhead, as we know it is, we could not have stood there without the Mediator. If heaven be the throne of the great King, we could not have stood there without the cloud of perfumed incense from Christ's meritorious death and righteousness ever rising up before that throne. But, now, heaven is a safe place for the saints to enter. Now may

they tread that sea of glass, like as of fire; and know that it is glass, and that no fire from it will consume them. Now will they be able to come up near to God, and not be afraid. I quote again a passage that often leaps to my lips,—a text of Scripture which is often shamefully misused: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Why, none of us could so dwell unless Christ had changed us by his grace; but now we may do so. What is the Scriptural answer to those questions, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" What saith the Scripture? Listen: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." This is the man who shall dwell there. With God, who is a consuming fire, we, like the holy children in the burning, fiery furnace, shall find it safe to dwell, and find it bliss to dwell, because Christ is there. But there would have been no heaven, in the presence of God, for any man that lives, after sin had once come into the world, if Jesus had not gone there as the high priest of old went up to the blazing throne whereon the shekinah shone, and sprinkled it with blood out of the basin, and then waved the censer to and fro till the thick smoke hid the cherubim, and, for a while resting, spake with God. Even so, has Christ gone within the veil, and sprinkled his own atoning blood upon his Father's throne, and then waved aloft the censer full of the incense of his mercy; and now it is safe for us to have access with boldness to the throne of glory as well as to the throne of grace. Thus hath he prepared a place for us.

Another meaning, I think, is allowable, namely, that *Christ has prepared heaven for us by appearing there in his glory.* I said that his very presence made heaven, but now I add that his glory there makes heaven yet more glorious. How does Christ describe the heavenly state? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." It will be their bliss, then, to see his glory; but there would have been no glory for them to see if he had not gone there in his glory. But, now, his presence there, in all his majesty and splendour, makes heaven still more glorious. Oh, how I long to see him in his glory! Long to see him, did I say? I would part with all the joys of time and sense to gaze upon him seated upon his throne. Oh! what will it be to see him? You have seen how painters have failed when they have tried to depict him. The bravest artist may well tremble, and the brightest colours fade, when anyone tries to paint him even in his humiliation. There is no other face so marred as his face was; but what will it be in heaven when it is marred no more? No tear in his eye! No spittle running down his cheeks! No giving of his face to them that pluck

out the hair; but, oh, the glory of manhood perfected, and allied with Deity! "The King in his beauty!" Why, methinks, to see him but for a minute, if we never saw him again, might furnish us with an eternity of bliss; but we shall gaze upon him, in his glory, day without night, never fainting, or flagging, or tiring, but delighting for ever to behold him smile, for evermore to call him ours, and to see him still before us. He has gone to heaven, then, in his glory; and, surely, that is preparing a place for us!

Besides that, we cannot tell what arrangements had to be made, in order to prepare a place of eternal blessedness for the Lord's redeemed. Certain it is that, in the economy of the universe, everything has its place. Men have discovered, as you know, what they call evolution. They think that one thing grows out of another, because, long before they were born, everybody with half an eye could see that one thing fitted into another; and as one step rises above another step by a beautiful gradation, so do the created things of God. Not that they grow out of each other any more than the stones of a staircase grow out of one another; they rise above each other, but they were so made from the first by the skill and wisdom of God. That a dewdrop should be precisely of the size and shape that it is, is necessary to the perfection of the universe. That there should be insects born in such a month to fertilize the flowers that bloom in that month, and others to suck the sweetness of those flowers, is all necessary. God has arranged everything, from the little to the great, with perfect skill. There is a place for everything with God, and everything in its place. It was a question where to put man. He had a place once. When God created this world, he made a pyramid, and set man upon the very top of it, giving him dominion over all the works of his hands; but then man fell. Now, it is more difficult to restore than it is at first to place. Often and often, you must have found that, when a thing has gone awry, it has cost you more trouble to set it right than if it had to be made *de novo*. Where, then, was the place for man to be? O matchless love, O sacred wisdom, that provided that man's place should be where Christ's place was and is! Lo, he who came down from heaven, and who also was in heaven, has gone back to heaven. He carried manhood with him; and, in so doing, one with him his Church has found her place. His union to the Godhead has found a place for his Church at the right hand of God, even the Father, where Christ sitteth; and all is as it should be.

As I have already told you, I do not know much about this matter; but I should not wonder if there has been going on, ever since Christ went up to heaven, a putting things straight,—getting this race of creatures into its proper place, and that other race, and the other race; so that, when we get to heaven, nobody will say, "You have got my place." Not even Gabriel will say to me, "Why, what business have you here? You have got my place." No, no; you shall have a place of your own, beloved; and all the members of Christ's Church shall find a place prepared which no one else shall be able to claim, for nobody shall be dispossessed or put out of his rightful position.

It struck me, as I turned this subject over in my mind, that *our Lord Jesus Christ knew that there was a place to be prepared for each one of his people.* It may be—I cannot tell,—that, in some part of the society of heaven, one spirit will be happier than it might have been in another part. You know that, even though you love all the brethren, you cannot help feeling most at home with some of them. Our blessed Lord and Master had no sinful favouritism, yet he did love twelve men better than all the rest of his disciples; and out of the twelve he loved three, whom he introduced into mysteries from which he excluded the other nine; and even out of the three, there was one, you know, who was "that disciple whom Jesus loved." Now, everybody here has his likings; I do not know if we shall carry anything of that spirit to heaven. If we do, Christ has so prepared a place for us that you shall be nearest, in your position and occupation, to those who would contribute most to your happiness. You shall be where you can most honour God, and most enjoy God. You would be glad enough to be anywhere,—would you not?—with the very least of the saints in heaven if there be any degrees of glory among their thrones, or at his feet, so long as you might see Christ's face. But, depend upon it, if there be any association—any more intimate connection—between some saints than among others, Jesus Christ will so beautifully arrange it that we shall all be in the happiest places. If you were to give a dinner-party, and you had a number of friends there, you would like to pick the seats for them. You would say, "Now, there is So-and-so, I know that he would like to sit next to So-and-so;" and you would try so to arrange it. Well, in that grand wedding feast above, our Saviour has so prepared a place for us that he will find us each the right position. I was talking, this afternoon, with one whom I very dearly love, and she said to me, "I hope my place in heaven will not be far off yours:" and I replied, "Well, I trust so, too; but we are not married or given in marriage there." Such ties and such relationships must end, as far as they are after the flesh; but we know that there have been bonds of spirit that may still continue. I sometimes think that, if I could have any choice as to those I should live near in heaven, I should like to live in the region of such queer folk as Rowland Hill and John Berridge. I think I should get on best with them, for we could talk together of the way wherein God led us; and of how he brought souls to Christ by us, though some said that we were a deal too merry when we were down below, and that the people laughed when they listened to us, and some spoke as if that were a great sin. We will make them laugh up yonder, I warrant you; as we tell again the wonders of redeeming love, and of the grace of God, their mouths shall be filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing; and then,—

> "Loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
> While heaven's resounding mansions ring
> With shouts of sovereign grace;"

and I expect each of you, who love the Lord, will say the same.

I have no time for the other part of the sermon. You must come again to hear about THE PREPARED PEOPLE. But let me just say this to you,—The place is prepared, are *you* prepared for it? Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, your preparation has begun. Dost thou love the Lord, and love his people? If so, thy preparation is going on. Dost thou hate sin, and dost thou pant after holiness? If so, thy preparation is progressing. Art thou nothing at all, and is Jesus Christ thine All-in-all? Then thou art almost ready; and may the Lord keep thee in that condition; and before long, swing up the gates of pearl, and let thee in to the prepared place! May the Lord bring us all safely there, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XIV. 1—12; AND COLOSSIANS I. 1—19.

John xiv. Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled:*

This is one of those verses that you may read as slowly as you like, and spell out every letter, and find honey in it all.

1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

As Jews, they had already known and seen the power of God. They were now to rise to the faith of Christians, and to believe in Jesus their Saviour. Even though they should see him die, they were not to doubt him: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

2. *In my Father's house are many mansions:*

So there is room for many, there are homes for many, there is wealth for many; "In my Father's house are many mansions:"

2 *If it were not so, I would have told you.*

The Saviour seems to say to his disciples, "I keep nothing back from you; had there been some sorrowful fact to be revealed to you, I would at length have told you of it."

2. *I go to prepare a place for you.*

"There must be a heaven, for I am going there myself, and I am going on purpose to make it ready for you."

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

That is the first and simplest idea of heaven, to be with Christ; and I think it is the last and sublimest idea of heaven, too,—to be with Christ: "that where I am, there ye may be also."

4, 5. *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

The apostles blundered, and lost themselves in the words of their Master, instead of entering into the spirit of what he said; so we must not wonder if we often do the same. Unless we wait upon God to be instructed by his Spirit, even the plainest passages of Scripture may be obscure to us.

6, 7. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

Jesus had been talking about the many mansions, and now he talks about the Father. Is the Father, then, the same as heaven? Ay, indeed;

to come to the Father is to come to perfect blessedness, to know the fulness of his eternal love, and to enjoy it in face-to-face communion;—this is heaven. What higher bliss can we desire?

8, 9. *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

Do we, then, see the Father when we see Christ? And is the Father's presence heaven? Then, Christ is heaven; and to be with him is heaven. It is even so. He is the way to heaven, the truth of heaven, the life of heaven. He is heaven's everything.

> "His track I see, and I'll pursue
> The narrow way, till him I view;"—

and when I view him, shall I not have seen the Father, and have entered into the Father's rest?

10—12. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

In consequence of Christ's going to the Father, and the Spirit of God descending upon Christ's disciples, they are enabled to outdo their Master in some forms of holy service. For instance, some of them brought more to the faith than Christ himself had done during his lifetime, and so realized the fulfilment of this promise, "The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

Colossians i. Verses 1—14. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: as ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

As we read these words, we cannot help noticing how positively the apostle speaks. There are no "hope so's," "trust so's," and "ifs," and "buts"; but it is all, "it is so," and "it is so." And, beloved brethren, concerning eternal matters, nothing but certainties will suffice for us.

Allow uncertainties about your estates if you will, but we must have positive assurance concerning eternal things; and nothing short of this ought to content our spirits. Can we all say, as we listen to these words, "God *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness; he *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we *have* redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins"?

15. *Who is the image of the invisible God,—*

Admire this delightful passage, in which the apostle seems to burn and glow while he describes his Lord and Master: "who is the image of the invisible God,"—

15—19. *The firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

Blessed be his glorious name! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—875, 852, 866.

EXTRACTS FROM "NOTICES OF BOOKS" IN THE "SWORD AND THE TROWEL" FOR NOVEMBER:—

It will be a pleasant surprise to our readers to learn that MRS. C. H. SPURGEON has now been able to write so many of her "Personal Notes on a Text" that Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster expect to publish a new volume of them, in time for the Christmas sales, uniform with *A Carillon of Bells* and "*A Cluster of Camphire*," and at the same price (1s. 6d). As most of the chapters have been written during summertime, it is entitled "*A Basket of Summer Fruit;*" and it is hoped that its contents will prove to be what a poet has called "The summer fruit of the great Summer Land."

MR. SPURGEON had, long ago, intended to gather into a volume a selection of his *Addresses at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and other Prayer-meetings*, but the opportunity of doing so was never permitted to him. His talks on those occasions were upon such varied topics, and of such permanent interest, that his idea has been carried out: and Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster will shortly issue the volume, under the title, "*Only a Prayer-meeting!*"—the title of the first of the 40 Addresses included in the book, which will be uniform with MR. SPURGEON'S other works entitled "*Till He Come*," *The Soul Winner*, and *An All-round Ministry*, and will be the same price as those volumes (3s. 6d). It will be most helpful to conductors of Prayer-meetings, and to all who desire to increase the number and efficiency of such gatherings.

LONDON: PASSMORE AND ALABASTER, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS; and of all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DOOR.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 10TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 15th, 1879.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."—John x. 9.

How very condescendingly the Lord Jesus Christ sets himself forth! The noblest figures of speech are not too lofty to describe his merits. If we could speak with the tongues of poets and of angels, we could not adequately represent his loveliness; and though the writers of the Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Ghost, have used language which exceeds all other in majesty and beauty, even they are not able to tell all the excellence of the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yet, beloved friends, when he speaks of himself, he is pleased to use no lofty imagery, no far-fetched metaphors; but he talks of himself one day as water, and another day as bread; and here he deigns to call himself a door. The illustration is exceedingly simple; who is there that will not understand it? He means that, as by passing through a door we enter into a house, so by passing through Christ Jesus, by faith, we enter into eternal life, and enter into the true Church, and ultimately shall enter into heaven.

"I am the door." This metaphor is not only simple, but it is wonderfully commonplace. The dealers in profundities will not like this expression. The gentlemen who must have something new —something very striking—will hardly admire this kind of talk; but, then, our Lord does not court their admiration. His object is not to win the applause of the wise and the poetical, but to win the souls of the poor and the needy, to bring to them eternal life; so he uses what I may call a child's figure, a common-place figure, "I am the door."

He has selected this emblem, I should think, partly that it may often come before our notice. You will not go out of this place without seeing a door; you will not get into your own house without seeing a door; and when you are inside, you will not get into your parlour without seeing a door; and when you go up to bed, you

must pass through the door. When you rise, to-morrow morning, and start to go out to your work, you will have to open a door,—two doors probably; and, when you reach your work, there is pretty sure to be another door to be entered. Doors meet your gaze almost everywhere, so our Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to you, "I will meet you wherever you are; anywhere and everywhere, I will speak with you, and plead with you. I will make the door of every room in your house, and the door of every cupboard, too, to preach a little sermon to you, as you shall be reminded by it that 'I am the door.'" I am sure our Lord Jesus Christ does not want his ministers to deliver magnificent orations, spread-eagle sermons, with long and elaborate sentences in them. He wants them just to come and talk as he talked, in all simplicity, so that the very poorest and most illiterate of their hearers may understand their meaning, embrace the truth they proclaim, and find everlasting life in him of whom they speak. So shall I try to do at this time, keeping the style of my discourse congruous with the text.

We will begin by noticing first, *the door;* secondly, *the users of it:* "By me if any man enter in;" and, thirdly, *the privileges of each of these users:* "He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

I. First, then, concerning THE DOOR.

"I am the door," says Jesus; and the first thought that strikes us is, *the necessity of it.* Here is the house of mercy; and, inside, there is washing for the filthy, healing for the sick, food for the hungry, clothing for the naked; but suppose there had been no door to the house, what would it have availed us? Suppose there had been only windows, through which we could look in, and see the provision prepared there, and that we could hear the songs of those who were permitted to partake of it, but there was no door by which we could enter in; all the mercy of God would have been a tantalizing of our hunger in such a case as that. The house of mercy, without a door, would have been a house of misery to us. Look at this picture, if your eye can perceive it,—the city that lieth foursquare, that mighty city, whose pinnacles tower on high so loftily that the height is as great as the breadth, and the breadth is the same as the length; her very foundations are of precious stones, and her twelve gates are priceless pearls? Can your eye gaze, even for a moment, on that brilliance that outshines the sun? And can you hear the sound of harpers harping with their harps within that city whose streets are of pure gold? But suppose there was no door there, and that our spirits had to go flying, with awful beating of weary wing, round, and round, and round that solid wall, but never finding a gate where we could enter? What hope would there be for a soul shut out from the city of the perfect, the home of the blessed, because there was no door of entrance? Yet there would not have been any door if it had not been for Christ. Our sins had, as it were, walled up God, and shut him in; and walled us up, and shut us out. There would have been for us no going in to God, nor any coming out from God to us, had it not been for Christ, the Mediator, through whom we draw near to God

because, in him, God has drawn near to us. See, then, the necessity for this door; and, blessed be his holy name, see how Christ meets this necessity. We needed a door by which we could get to God, and Jesus says, "I am the door."

Next, observe *the singularity of it:* "I am *the* door." Is there no other entrance, then, into the divine mercy? Is there no other entrance into the true Church? Is there no other entrance into the eternal blessedness of heaven except by him? No; there is no other, for he says, "I am *the* door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." But suppose a man will not enter by this door; may he not climb up some other way? If he should attempt to do so, he would be a thief and a robber, and God would know how to deal with him. He may think himself a bold man, and a cunning man, and a man to be praised, for he has tried to enter into eternal life and glory by a way of his own; but God calls him a thief and a robber, and out he must go to the prison-house where such evildoers abound.

No; there is only one door, you may search the whole realm of nature, and you shall never discover another. Not by self-sufficiency, nor self-righteousness, nor priests, nor rites and ceremonies; not by anything of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, can you obtain admission there.

> "Could our zeal no respite know,
> Could our tears for ever flow,"—

"there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Believe in Jesus, put your trust in him, and you are saved; but, unless you come to him in that way, there is only one sentence for you: "He that believeth not shall be damned." There is no hope of salvation by any other means; our Lord Jesus Christ has himself said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." So that there is singularity in the way by which God has supplied our necessity, and therefore Christ said, "I am *the* door."

But, to my mind, the chief point in my text is *personality.* If we come to the Lord Jesus, and say to him, "O Lord, thou canst teach us how to get to heaven; wilt thou be pleased to tell us how we can enter the house of mercy, and the Church of God, and the kingdom of glory at the last?" he answers, "I am the way; I am the door." What dost thou mean, great Master? Tell us, what is the door? "I am the door." But, surely, Lord, thou meanest that, by copying and imitating thee, we shall enter in? He shakes his head, and says, "Not so; I am the door." But, surely, thou meanest that, by attending to certain rites which thou hast ordained, we shall enter? My brethren, he said not so, he simply said, "I am the door." But does not Christ mean that, by being orthodox, and believing certain doctrines which he has taught us, and which are identified with himself, we shall thereby enter into life, and be saved? He does not say so; he says, "I am the door." But is not baptism the door? No, for he says, "I am the door." But is not the Lord's supper the door? No, for he says, "I am the door."

But, surely, holy living must be the way into the kingdom of heaven? No, it is not; for Jesus says, "I am the door." Jesus himself, personally, is the **way** into his kingdom; there is no door into his sheepfold except himself,—his own person; so we must just come, and believe in himself, and trust in himself, for he is the door.

Would not some of the so-called "priests" lock us out of the fold if they had the keys? Thank God, they have neither the key nor the charge of the door; for whosoever believeth in Jesus, to whatsoever church he belongs outwardly, or if he belongs to no visible church at all, if he does but come to God by Christ, he is saved, for Christ is the door; and nothing else is the way of entrance,—neither this opinion, nor that external doing, nor such-and-such works, nor such-and-such feelings; but Christ himself, and Christ alone. The incarnate God—our substitutionary sacrifice, who rose again from the dead for our justification, who ascended up to the Majesty on high, whose prevalent plea is ever being presented on his people's behalf, and who is coming back again by-and-by,—he it is who is the door, and only by him can we enter the true Church on earth, and the "Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven."

Notice, dear friends, in the fourth place, over this door the word *suitability*. Jesus says, "I am the door." You know that every door has two sides to it, and so has Christ. Our side of this door is his humanity. Oh, how freely and how gladly we may come to Christ! I think that, if any of us had seen Christ when he was here on earth, we should have felt no desire to get away from him, but we should have been delighted to draw near to him. If, in this place, just now, a little child could see Jesus Christ as he was in the days of his flesh, I am sure that the boy or girl would soon have his or her hand in Jesus Christ's hand, for he was so sweet, and loving, and tender, that the children gladly ran to him. So that is our side of the door, Christ's gentle manhood; but what is God's side of the door? It is the full splendour of Christ's Godhead, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." So, our side of the door is Christ's gentle loving manhood; but what is God's side of the door? It is the full splendour of Christ's Godhead, and we can only come to the Father through him whose name is Emmanuel, "God with us."

And what do I see over that door but his own blood sprinkled, so that we may be quite sure of being accepted with God, for has not the Lord said to us, as he did to Israel in Egypt, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you"? Therefore, *the* door is Christ Jesus; so let me put the truth very plainly, and say that, if any of you wish to be saved, it must be by coming to God through Christ Jesus. You cannot be saved in any other fashion or way; but you will certainly be saved if you come to God by Christ Jesus. He is the door, and he is an open door, and a door available for you if you will but enter in by him: may his blessed Spirit sweetly incline you to do so! Then all the rich promises of this text shall be yours; you shall be saved, and you shall go in and out, and find pasture.

II. Now, in the second place, I am to speak of THE USERS OF THIS DOOR: "By me if any man enter in."

What is the main purpose of a door? It is *to give admission to the house.* There are some persons who stand and look at the door, or perhaps praise it, saying, "What a fine door that is!" Yet they do not go in through it; and I have known people, who liked to hear Christ extolled, yet they did not yield themselves to him. They said, "That was a rich gospel sermon," but they did not trust the Christ who was preached. They looked at the door; that was all.

There are others who occasionally knock at the door. They tell me that they have often prayed to God, but that they have never been heard. Well, it is wise to knock at this door, but is not enough to knock, for the text does not say, "By me if any man knock, he shall be saved;" but, "by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

I have known some persons, who have sat down on the step of this door; some of you have been sitting there a long time. You have been hearing the gospel, and you have listened to it with some degree of attention. So far, so good; but if you do nothing more, you are simply sitting down on the door-step. Now, doors were not made for us to sit on the door-step. Little children frequently do that at your houses, do they not? You often wish they did not; yet there they will sit, and play. But that is not the purpose for which the door was intended. A door is made for us to pass through it, not for us to sit down in front of it. If a man stands and admires your door, or if he knocks at your door, and yet still sits on your door-step, he is not making the right use of the door. According to our text, the proper way to use a door is to enter in by it; and that is the right way to use Christ, to enter in by him.

There are some, who do not do that, but they very jealously guard the door. They stand like sentinels outside the door; they are true Protestants, and their blood is on fire at the very thought of the Pope. They like to read books that bully everybody who does not agree with them. Only let a heretic come near; they are orthodox enough to knock him down directly. They are protecting the door, but they do not go through it. I have marvelled to find some men downright bigots in defence of the gospel which they have never received themselves; they would not allow anybody to say a word against it on any account whatever. They are righteously indignant at error, yet they have never been saved by the truth. I should not like to be a hungry man set to guard a loaf of bread, to have to walk up and down, like a soldier with bayonet fixed, and all the while to be dying by starvation, my bones starting through my skin, yet never eating a crumb; taking care that no Zulu ever came near the bread, shooting anybody who approached it, but never getting a morsel to eat myself. There are numbers of people who are doing just that; they are simply sentinels at the door, remaining outside all the while. But the proper use of the door of salvation is to enter in by it, so our Lord Jesus says in our text.

Note, particularly, *the description given of those who use the door:*

"By me if *any man* enter in." Christ does not say, "By me if any king or prince should enter in." No, thank God, he says, "If any *man* enter in,"—any man from the slums, any man from the abode of poverty or vice,—"he shall be saved." Christ does not say, "If any highly intelligent person is able to understand the plan of salvation, he shall be saved." It is not difficult to understand, for it is only like going through a door, and anybody knows how to do that. You coal-heavers, who have strayed in here, and you squires from the country, who have your pockets well lined, and you poor people who have your pockets empty, you who have good characters, and you who would do better if you were to lose your present characters, for they are no good to you, my text is so broad in its comprehension that it shuts none of you out: "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

I want to call your special attention to this point, for, evidently, this entering in is irrespective of character, because a man can go through a door whether he is the biggest thief that lives, or the most honest man in the world. He does not need to be a good fellow to go through a door; and when Christ says, "any man," he means the sinner who deserves the deepest hell. It means me; it means you, my friends, who are in the same condition as I was in when I came to Jesus: "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Perhaps someone says, "Do you mean to tell me that men are to go to heaven without being holy?" I tell you no such thing; but I say that they are to come to Christ without being holy. They trust in Christ, and then he makes them fit to go to heaven; but, at their first coming to him, there is no fitness required. You are to come just as you are,—downright bad, through and through,—and just pass through this door.

Going through a door is a very simple action; it may be performed by an idiot, or by a baby who can but just toddle. That is faith,—passing from this side of Christ to the other side,—passing from where I am, in myself, to be reconciled with God by trusting in Jesus Christ. Passing through a door is not a long operation; it can be done in the twinkling of an eye, and so can a man be saved in the twinkling of an eye. Passing through a door is not a difficult operation if the door is open; and coming to Christ is not a difficult operation. I will tell you when it is difficult; that is, when a man has an enormous load of what he calls "good works" upon his back. I have seen people in that condition, they could not get through the door at all; they had such a mountain of good works that they could not get through the doorway; a truss of hay was nothing to the load they carried; they could not pass through the strait gate. The man who gets to Christ most quickly is the one who is utterly stripped of everything of his own.

Some people cannot get through this door because they carry their heads too high. I believe that he who is bowed down to the dust, on his hands and knees, is the man who gets in most easily. He who is nothing, he who is nobody, he who is undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving, he who has no hope apart from Christ, is the man who most quickly finds hope in Christ.

Righteous self is very hard to get rid of, but that is the great difficulty of passing through this door.

You see, then, that character is not set down as a fitness for Christ, neither is feeling to be set down as a preparation for coming to Christ. Christ wants nothing to prepare a sinner for him. That poor man, who was wounded, and left half-dead on the road to Jericho, would have been in a still worse plight if the Samaritan had said to him, "Now, my good man, I am willing to help you, but you are hardly fit to be helped. I am afraid you do not feel your wounds sufficiently; I am afraid you are not sensible enough of the bruises you have received; I am afraid that, at the present moment, you are scarcely awakened to your danger; you seem to me to be half stupefied by that crack you had on your head; so I must leave you, I am afraid, until you are able to feel a little more, and to be better prepared for me to help you." He did nothing of the sort; but he just brought out his oil and wine, and he rent his coat, and took a piece of rag to bind up the wounds, and lifted the poor fellow up, and set him on his own beast, and took him to the inn. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is far better than that good Samaritan, but he acts on the same principle. He comes to the sinner just where he is, and he does not want him to feel this or feel that, or be this or be that, or do this or do that; but just to trust him, to rest in him, and in him alone, and he will pour in the oil and the wine, and heal the sin-sick soul. Feeling or not feeling, if thou wilt pass through that door, thou shalt be saved. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou art not condemned; and, therefore, thou art saved.

So now I leave that point, only praying the Lord to make it very plain to all who have heard it. It may seem, to some of you, to be the plainest thing in the world, for you have heard it so often; but I tell you, beloved, that the poor trembling sinner needs to hear this over, and over, and over again; for, although it is put in the plainest Saxon that can be discovered, he will not understand it till the Holy Ghost opens his understanding. They still think there is something to do, like that old German Lutheran woman, who said, "I do not understand this; my minister asked me a hundred questions before he thought I was converted; and, as for me, I was groaning and crying for many years before I dared believe in Jesus Christ." That is just the way with many; they will do anything except trust Jesus there and then; yet the gospel —the true simple gospel is, "Christ is all; trust him, and be saved." He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" therefore, trust him, trust him, trust him, trust him, and, there and then, salvation is yours. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in,"—that is all he has to do,—"he shall be saved."

III. Now, very briefly, I want to speak of THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO USE THIS DOOR ARIGHT.

The first privilege of the right users of it is, *salvation*. Those who have entered in by Christ the door are saved. He says, "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved;"—saved from the guilt

of sin, saved also from the power of sin. He shall be saved from being what he has been in the past; he shall be so saved as to enter into holiness, and so saved as to enter into heaven. What a grand salvation that is!

"Oh!" says one, "I could believe in Christ if I felt that I was saved." Never put the cart before the horse; that is reversing the proper order of things. Trust in Christ, and then you are saved. Go through the door of which I have been speaking to you. "Oh! but I wish I felt that I was saved." Go through the door, man, for our Lord Jesus says, "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." There is no text that says, "If any man shall wait outside the door, he shall be saved." There is no encouragement given to people to say, "We will sit and wait till the angel troubles the pool;" but the command of Christ is, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The message of the gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." A gospel that tells sinners to wait is not the gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ blesses; his word is, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

And what follows this salvation? The next privilege is, *liberty:* "he shall go in and out." We do not come to Christ to be shut up in a prison; we shall go in and out. There is no such liberty as you who believe in Jesus have;—liberty to go to your bed at night, and to feel that it does not matter whether you wake up here or not;—liberty to go out into the world, and feel that losses and crosses cannot happen to you without your Father's permission, and that you will have grace to bear them; liberty to go wherever you please on the errands of God, always protected by his almighty power. Do not imagine that walking with God, as Enoch did, means a narrow and confined life. He only has true largeness of heart who has God dwelling in his heart.

Then notice the further privilege that is included in this liberty; that is, *liberty of access:* "he shall go in." He who goes through the door—that is, believes in Christ,—shall go in to God in prayer, to pour out his heart before the Lord. He shall go in to the Church to have fellowship with all the saints. He shall go in to that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him; and, one day, he shall go into the innermost heaven, into that blessed circle where God reveals his love in the highest degree: "he shall go in."

And he shall have *liberty of egress*, as well as liberty of access; for, after he has been with God in private, he shall go out, and—

> "Tell to sinners round
> What a dear Saviour he has found."

He shall go out to bear his cross with joy, and to lift up his Captain's banner with confidence. He shall go out farther and farther afield, learning more of the things of Christ, discovering more and more how great are the estates of God, which cannot be enclosed within a ring fence, but which exceed all space, and can only be compared with eternity and infinity.

Then there is added the privilege of *nourishment:* "and shall

find pasture." Whatever his heart needs to live upon, to fill it, to sustain it, to comfort it, to make it grow, to develop it, to perfect it, he shall find it all in Christ Jesus his Lord and Saviour. When a soul comes to Christ, and receives life, it does not receive a life that will ever die; for Jesus, who is our life, is also the bread of life, and we live upon him, and feed upon him, and so our life endures until, in its full expansion, we enter into our eternal inheritance before the throne of God.

These, then, are the privileges of those who enter in by Christ the door,—salvation, liberty, access, egress, and nourishment for the soul. Who will have all these things by entering the door? Sometimes, when I have preached the gospel with all my might, I go away home, and think to myself, "Oh! I am grieved for those people who will not lay hold upon Christ, I could cry my heart out over them." But, at other times, I feel that I must take God's side of the matter, and say, "Well, if they will not have salvation, —if his Son has been torn from his own bosom, and put to death to save men, and yet they despise him,—if God writes his message of love in letters of blood, the blood of his own well-beloved Son, and still men refuse to accept it,—then, their blood be upon their own head." If Jehovah stoops right down from heaven, and says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,"—if he goes out of his way, as it were, to plead with sinners, by his mighty love, and by the precious blood of Christ, his Son, I sometimes think that, if they will not come to him then, I am more inclined to blame them than to pity them. If they will not see what God sets before them, and they are then struck blind, who can blame the justice of God? Surely, they deserve the deepest hell who refuse and reject the Christ of God.

Suppose that a man was standing at your door, and that he said he was starving, and that you pointed to the door, and bade him enter. But he says, "Yes, I see the door." "Well, then, enter it, and you shall have food." "No," he says, "I am very hungry, but I am afraid I do not feel my hunger enough to entitle me to go in." You say, "My dear fellow, enter in." "But,—but,—but,— I—I—I—;" he keeps on saying; and you reply, "My dear fellow, do you see the door?" "Yes," he says. "Well, then, enter in." He says that he is ready to faint, that he feels so sick, he wants medicine. You answer, "Everything is inside that door, and the one condition is, 'Enter in.'" "Oh, dear!" he cries, "I am worse than I thought I was; I am covered all over with a foul disease; I dare not go in." Still you say to him, "Enter in; everything is ready, come along with you; do not wait outside any longer." "But I cannot climb over the top of the roof." "I did not ask you to do so; I said, 'Come in by the door.'" "But I cannot dig through the cellar, and come up that way." "I did not ask you to do anything of the kind; come in by the door."

Is not that what the apostle meant in the chapter we read? "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,

to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "But I thought—I thought"—the man still says, "that, to get such great mercy as to be fed, and to be clothed, and to be healed,—I thought that there would be something for me to do, some performance for me to go through." You say to him, "My dear man, I have told you, over and over and over again, that everything depends upon your just entering in by that door. Will you do it?" He comes right up to the door, he looks through the doorway, it is wide enough for him to pass through, and there is all that he needs to be had just the other side of that door. He says, "I am almost persuaded to enter, I am very near the kingdom." But you exclaim, "My dear fellow, you will perish, near as you are, if you do not take one step more, over the threshold, into the house. Receive what is provided, and all will be well with you; but if you will not enter, you must perish." I think I hear somebody say, "Then, I will do it! I will trust Christ, whether I may or may not." You are a saved man if you only did it while I was speaking the word, for there was never a soul that said, "Christ shall be All-in-all to me," but Christ really was All-in-all to that soul. May the Holy Spirit bring many of you to that blessed decision! So, God shall be glorified, and you shall share his joy for ever and ever. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS X.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

No curse falls from his lips, though they had persecuted him without mercy, hunted him from city to city, and gnashed their teeth at the very mention of his name. Yet he has no desire for them but their salvation; he utters no malediction against them, but the prayer goes up from his very heart, "that they might be saved." Let that be your worst wish for any living man. Whatever he may do to you, let this be your heart's desire and prayer for him, that he may be saved.

2, 3. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

There are many, in these days also, who are exactly in this condition. They are very zealous; they are full of piety of a certain kind, but it is with the view of setting up a righteousness of their own. Oh! that God would save them from this false way! For there is no acceptable righteousness but the righteousness which is of God in Christ Jesus; and the more intensely they labour after the false righteousness, the more bitter will be their disappointment at the last. Man can only be truly righteous in God's way; he will never be so in his own.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

He has put the law away so far as his own people are concerned; and, by that act, he has removed the possibility of self-righteousness, since we are no longer under the law. Though there can come no condemnation to us by it, there certainly can come no righteousness by it. Even Christ's own people can never have any righteousness which cometh by the law; they must look to Christ, and find in him alone all that can be demanded by the law, "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

5. *For Moses—*

The Holy Spirit wisely directed the apostle to quote from Moses, for he was the lawgiver, and was looked upon by the Jews as the great representative of the law.

5—8. *Describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee,—*

Not up yonder, nor down there; neither in the heights nor in the abyss: "The word is nigh thee,"—

8—10. *Even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

To trust the risen Saviour, to put your soul into his hands, and then to confess your faith by publicly declaring that you are on his side,—these are the things which he demands of us in order to our salvation, and these he enables us to render. Are there any believers here who have never confessed Christ? Let them question themselves how far they can be said to be true disciples of him who demands that, where there is faith, confession of it should be made. If thou believest in Jesus, look at this Scripture, and feel ashamed of thyself if thou hast been ashamed to own him as thy Saviour; for is not the promise this,—that, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"?

11. *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

Shall not be ashamed of having done so, and shall not be ashamed of having missed the blessing which was promised, for he shall surely receive what God says shall follow his faith and confession.

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:*

In this matter of salvation there is no difference between them.

12. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

Jews or Gentiles, they must come to Christ, and come to him by the same simple way of trusting him; and if they do so, they shall be saved.

13—15. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

See, then, what an honour God has put upon the testimony of his Word; and be not slow, my dear friends, to tell abroad his glorious gospel. The apostle does not merely mean preaching from the pulpit, but preaching anyhow, making known the gospel by any means. It is in that way that hearing comes; from hearing comes faith; and from faith comes salvation. Who, then, would not tell out the glad news which God uses to the salvation of immortal souls?

16—18. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?*

Is that the reason why many do not believe,—because they have not heard the gospel? Well, it is not the reason in the case of anybody here present, for I suppose all of you have heard the gospel,—probably have often heard it.

18, 19. *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?*

Ah! that they did; the gospel was sounded in their ears in a hundred ways, yet they rejected it.

19—21. *First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

God grant that we may not be like them! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—550, 538, 552.

FROM "NOTICES OF BOOKS" IN NOVEMBER "SWORD AND TROWEL":—

The *Book and Sheet Almanacks* for 1902 are almost ready for publication. It is another evidence of the vitality of MR. SPURGEON'S literary labours that, ten years after his home-going, so much of the products of his pen or voice appears in the two Almanacks, and so helps to give them continued acceptance among his large constituency. MRS. C. H. SPURGEON has again selected the texts for meditation during the whole year, and she has also written her annual letter to her readers, and one of the short illustrated articles in the little book.

The great central picture on the Sheet Almanack is of special interest, for it is a representation of "Hay-making at Westwood," while the four corner illustrations set forth various forms of work-day life and Christian service. There is a special article by "John Ploughman" on the broad-sheet, and his proverbs still largely predominate over all others. For these reasons, it is believed that both the new Almanacks will be as warmly welcomed as were the many that preceded them.

Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster desire us to call our readers' very special attention to a new series of little volumes, of which the first is about to be published. They will be similar in size to the *Words of Wisdom Series*, but will be issued at 1s. 6d. each. They will be entitled *Central Truths' Series*, and the first will be called "*Good Tidings of Great Joy.*" *Christ's Incarnation the Foundation of Christianity.* By C. H. SPURGEON. The various aspects of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ are dealt with, in a devotional spirit, and in a popular, simple style, which makes the book suitable for widespread circulation, especially amongst those who are perplexed by the great "mystery of godliness," God manifest in the flesh.

LONDON: PASSMORE AND ALABASTER, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS; and of all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PATIENCE, COMFORT, AND HOPE FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 20th, 1879

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Romans xv. 4.

THE apostle Paul was an inspired man when he wrote this Epistle, so there was no necessity, on the part of the Holy Spirit, when guiding his mind and pen, to employ words which had been used before in the Scriptures, for his language is unlimited. Yet Paul, inspired as he was, frequently quoted from the Old Testament, and in the verse preceding our text he quotes from the Psalms: "As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." One special reason for quoting from the Old Testament was, doubtless, to put honour upon it, for the Holy Spirit foresaw that there would be some, in these later days, who would speak of it disparagingly. Not so did our Lord Jesus Christ; not so did his apostles; not so did any by whom the Holy Ghost spake. The Old Testament is not to be regarded with one jot less of reverence and love than is the New Testament; they must remain bound together, for they are the one revelation of the mind and will of God; and woe be to the man who shall attempt to rend asunder that seamless garment of Holy Scripture.

There are some who speak of the Old Testament as if it were worn out; but, indeed, it has about it all the freshness, and the force, and the dew of its youth; and, in the additional light that the New Testament throws upon its histories, its prophecies, and its promises, it has gathered force rather than lost any, so that we, probably, can appreciate the Old Testament Scripture far more highly now that we have the New Testament also than we could have done if we had not received both the early and the later revelations.

Some have supposed that the light of the New Testament is so bright that it quite eclipses the light of the Old Testament, as the

rising of the sun makes us forget the moon; but it is not so. The Old Testament now shines with a brighter light than ever to those whose faith is fixed on Jesus Christ, and whose eyes behold him in the pages of the New Testament. I confess that, sometimes, a type or an emblem, which would have been dark or obscure but for the light that has been shed upon it by the New Testament, has seemed to me, if possible, to be clearer even than the New Testament itself. I have seemed to see the brightness of the glory of the revelation concentrated and focussed about some of the darker passages of the Old Testament so manifestly that, instead of the Old seeming to be outdone by the New, I have almost thought it to be the other way, if such a thought might be tolerated for a moment. There is no need, however, to compare them, for they are both a part of that all Scripture which is God-breathed.

Nor has the authority of the Old Testament ceased. Of course, the legal ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation are done away with, for we are not under the law, but under grace; yet, even in their passing away, they answer an important purpose. They often afford us instruction where they are not needed for direction. Still is it true, my brethren, concerning the entire Book, that it was "written for our learning;" and he is a learned man who knows much of Scripture, but he is unlearned, and unstable in the things of God, who knows a thousand other things, but does not know what "things were written aforetime," and who does not bend his soul, his heart, his intellect, to the believing and the understanding of that which God has spoken of old time by his prophets and apostles.

Believing this most truly, as I am sure we do, let us think, for a little while, about Holy Scripture and that which grows out of it. The text says, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

I shall take the liberty of reading the text, not exactly as it is in our version, but putting in the articles which our translators have left out; I never like to leave out the article where it is inserted by the original writer. So the passage runs thus, "That we through *the* patience and *the* comfort of the Scriptures might have *the* hope." That rendering conveys to us another shade of meaning, and I am convinced that it is the true one. Grammatical construction requires that the meaning should be thus brought out by the use of the articles.

So, first, we will consider *the patience of the Scriptures;* secondly, *the comfort of the Scriptures;* and then, thirdly, though that may not be precisely according to the letter of the text, yet, I think, perfectly consistent with truth,—*the hope of the Scriptures.*

I. First, then, let us think of THE PATIENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

You, know, beloved, that we are saved by faith, and that, by faith, we find complete and immediate salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. But you must never forget that, as soon as we are saved, we come under the discipline of Christ, and a part of that discipline lies in the exercise of patience,—patience in many senses,—"the patience of the Scriptures."

First, there is *the patience inculcated in the Scriptures,* of which I

should say, first, that it signifies resignation to the divine will In the olden times, the Scriptures enjoined submission to the will of the Most High, whatever that submission might involve. Solomon wrote, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." The Lord himself said, by the mouth of his servant, the psalmist, "Be still, and know that I am God." And the Holy Spirit said, through the lips of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" The Old Testament, like the New, bids us be patient under the hand of God. So we must be, my brethren. Submit yourselves unto God, for this is an essential part of the life of faith. The man who will not yield himself up to the divine will, and meekly bear it, whatever it may be, is evidently rebellious against his God. How, then, can he be said to be trusting in the Lord? He has at least some unbelief still clinging to him; for, were he fully a believer, he would resign himself to the Lord's will, and humble himself under the mighty hand of God that he might exalt him in due time.

This patience also includes a continuance in the good work and walk, though we may have to face human or even Satanic opposition. The patience inculcated in the Scriptures is a patient perseverance in well doing; it is the walking in the path of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" it is the constant abiding in the fear of the Lord. Nowhere does either the Old or the New Testament speak of our being saved by a kind of temporary faith or a spasm of love; but herein is seen the patience of the saints,—that, although they are opposed by the seed of the serpent, and by the old serpent himself, they still hold on their way, despite all opposition and persecution, even to the end, and so they are saved.

This patience of the saints includes also the bearing of our brother's burdens. It is in that connection that our text appears: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves;" and this is part of the patience inculcated in the Scriptures. The old law taught men to love their neighbours as themselves. Now, we quickly make excuses for our own infirmities, and it therefore behoves us to endure the infirmities of others,—to put a kind construction on what might have been harshly condemned,—to bear with the misconceptions of our conduct made by others in their mistake, or even misrepresentations made in their anger,—to be gentle and tender as a nurse is with a child,—never to be hard, and harsh, and severe, for this is contrary to the second table of the law which can be summed up in the brief expression, love to men. Oh, I would to God that we had more of this spirit in all our churches! Our Saviour said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." But how often is that new commandment forgotten in the impatient way in which we show our petulance towards weak and perhaps provoking saints! God grant that, in the future, we may have more patience in this respect!

Patience, in the Old Testament, is often set forth in waiting for the fulfilment of the promises and the prophecies. The patriarchs had to wait; Israel had to wait; we also are exhorted to wait on the Lord, and to be of good courage, for he shall strengthen our heart. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." So you see that the patience of the Scriptures, that is to say, the patience which the Scriptures inculcate, is that which we all need to exercise.

But it is also *the patience which the Scriptures exhibit;* for, when you turn to the grand old Book, you find that it gives us, in actual life, the exemplification of the precepts which were written upon the tables of stone, or upon the ancient rolls of Scripture. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," says the apostle James. Ye may not have to sit among the ashes as he did, or to endure such trials as fell upon him; but, between here and heaven, you may expect to have losses, and crosses, and bereavements, and harsh words from those who ought to be your comforters. O beloved, may you have, at such times, the patience of the Scriptures, and be able to say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job is one of the earthly patterns of patience, though he was not perfect in it. May our patience at least come up to his standard!

We need, too, the patience of David. He held on his way, though opposed by wicked men, and especially by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains. Yet David behaved himself with discretion, and would not lift up his hand to smite the Lord's anointed, even though the crown of Israel seemed again and again to be within his reach. You know how patiently he persevered, notwithstanding all the opposition which came to thrust him out of his course.

Then, with regard to bearing the infirmities of our brethren, you know the patience of the Scriptures as set forth in the case of Joseph. How tender and kind he was to his brethren even when he seemed to be most severe to them! With what a generous heart did he forgive their cruelty to him! You remember how he framed excuses for them as he said, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God;" though he knew right well that, in their jealousy and malice, they had sold him for a slave.

If I speak of the patience that waits for the fulfilment of promises, I may remind you that the Old Testament sets before you notable examples of this kind of waiting in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. They waited long in the land of which they owned not so much as a single foot, except the field that contained Abraham's place of burial in the cave of Machpelah; dwelling in tents, they waited, sojourners with God, and strangers in the land, until the time when the promise should be fulfilled. This is just how you also have to live, beloved. This world is not a place of rest for you, for it is polluted; so you are to live the separated life of a pilgrim and a stranger until the Lord shall bring you into the Heavenly Canaan, and give you the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," which is "reserved in heaven for you."

This patience is, however, most clearly set forth in the Scriptures in the life of our dear Lord and Master. You will find in him patience in its highest perfection. He is the model of patient perseverance in the work his Father gave him to do; the pattern of patient silence under the reproaches and sarcasms of wicked men, the image of patient suffering as he bowed his head unto death, even the death of the cross. He it is, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." This is part of the patience of the Scriptures, and such patience as this we have, each one of us, to seek.

But, in addition to its being the patience inculcated, and the patience exhibited, it is *the patience produced by the Scriptures.* Beloved, if you read the Scriptures diligently, and meditate much upon them;—if you drink in of their spirit, it will be with you as it is with certain insects which, when they feed upon a peculiar kind of flower, their silk is coloured like that upon which they feed. You shall find that, feeding upon the patience of the Scriptures, in meditation and prayer, you yourself will find reproduced in you the patience of the Scriptures. If you want to kill impatience, turn to the Word of God, look out an appropriate text, ask to have it applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit, and see whether the grace of patience is not thus implanted within you. Have you become weary in well-doing? Then, stay yourselves upon a precious promise, and your weariness will speedily depart. Do you seem as if you could not bear the continued opposition of ungodly men? Turn you to the promises of your gracious Lord and Master, and you shall learn to rejoice, and be exceeding glad, even when they persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for his name's sake. The saints of God have long proved that the Scriptures produce patience. There is no literature in the world that is comparable to the many Books that are here put into one library called the Bible. There are no philosophical maxims, under heaven, that can produce such patience as the Word of God produces when the Spirit of God comes riding in his own chariot of the Word into the soul of man. It is not the patience of a brute beast that cannot complain, or the patience of the stoic who refuses to feel. It is the patience of a child who believes in his father's love, the patience of a soldier who does not expect to conquer the enemy without stern fighting, the patience of a pilgrim who pushes on because he believes in the inheritance which he will ultimately reach. This is the patience of the Scriptures; may God, of his great mercy, work it in each one of us!

II. Then, in addition to the patience of the Scriptures, we are exhorted to seek to possess THE COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES.

It is not right for us to be patient, yet miserable. I think I have seen some, who professed to be Christians, give themselves up to a mode of life which was not at all what it should be. They did not actually complain, but one could see that they were not happy. This is not the point to which the Spirit of God would bring us; he would have us get the comfort of the Scriptures. Well, now, what is the comfort of the Scriptures?

To go over the same heads again, I should say that it is, first, *the comfort which the Scriptures inculcate.* You know how the Word of God abounds in injunctions and promises concerning comfort and consolation. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." There are many passages, in the Old Testament, in which we are plainly exhorted to be glad; and when you come to the New Testament, you have such messages as this, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me;" or this, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The Scripture bids us not merely to submit to tribulation, but to rejoice in it;—not simply to be patient, but to glory in infirmities, to glory in trials, to glory in tribulations, because then the grace of God rests upon us all the more manifestly.

Then, brethren, we should have *the comfort which the Scriptures exhibit.* What a charming picture of a comfortable, happy frame of mind is that of Enoch, who walked with God for centuries together! "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years." How beautifully do we see the spirit of consolation exhibited in the character of Abraham, who, with all his troubles, as a stranger in a strange land, walks among men as a king! Have you never envied that quiet dignity with which, believing in God, he seemed also to master all around him without any sign of agitation of mind? Oh, that you had such comfort as he had when he took his son, his only son, whom he loved, to offer him up for a sacrifice! You never have had such a trial as that; and, probably, you never will; but in all that time of testing, what solid comfort he had! There were no written Scriptures then, yet how grand is the consolation which the Scripture describes him as having! "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Therefore, he staggered not at the promise through unbelief. Admire, too, the comfort that you often see in the case of David. His was a troubled life, but he stayed himself upon his God. As one remarkable instance of this, think of the time when he came back from the Philistines, and found Ziklag burned, all who were left in it carried away captive, and "the people"—his own followers—"spake of stoning him;" "but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." All through the Psalms, you get beautiful pictures of the comfort that David enjoyed even in his times of trouble. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Thus he talked to himself, and admonished himself; and even when he sank in deep waters, he still cried unto the Lord, and still hoped in his mercy. What a sweet song of hope he sings in the 23rd Psalm! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

So, be patient, brethren, but be comfortable, too. Submit to the

will of God, but do not do it like slaves who submit because they must, but like children who learn to rejoice in their father's will, and who, though they cannot understand it, yet believe it to be good and right. If you want to exhibit the comfort of the Scriptures, do as Hezekiah did when Rab-shakeh came with Sennacherib's letter full of filthiness and blasphemy: "Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." This is the comfort of the Scriptures, that we may go to the Lord in the worst time of trouble, and spread the whole case before the eye of infinite love, expecting and being sure that God will, in some way, work deliverance for us.

And, as I said about the patience of the Scriptures, so is it with the comfort. I have spoken of the comfort which the Scriptures inculcate and exhibit; now I want to speak of *the comfort which the Scriptures produce.* Oh, how sweetly do the Scriptures console and cheer the heart! I am only saying what many of you, dear brothers and sisters, know as well as I do, and I know it in my very heart. There have been times, in my life, when all the words of men, however kindly they may have been spoken, have altogether failed to comfort me; but a promise—ay, I was about to say, half a promise—from God has lifted my soul out of the depths of despair, and made it rise like a lark, singing as it soared in the clear sunlight of Jehovah's countenance. When the Spirit of God applies even the briefest portion of Scripture to our spirit, it is a balm for every care, and the end of every difficulty. We are glad, then, in the worst of weathers, to take up our cross, and go on our way rejoicing, when the consolations of the Holy Scriptures are applied to us by the Holy Ghost. For, brethren, the Scriptures always exactly fit our case, whatever it may be. Was there ever a book that was so much written for you as this Book is? I claim that it was written for me, yet I grant that it was also written for you;—I mean, not merely for you all, as a whole congregation, but for each child of God. There are passages in the Bible which sometimes come to my heart with such force that it seems as if the Holy Spirit must have written them the very day I read them. He must have known all about my case, for he has put a little word into that verse which just exactly suits me. I know that it was written thousands of years ago, but what a marvellous prescience must have been there to foresee the peculiarity and speciality of my trial! Have not you found it so, beloved? Has not the comfort of the Scriptures been so suitable, so tender, so condescending, that you have enjoyed it, and been made glad by it?

There is also this further comfort, that the Scriptures are so certain. When we have trusted in a promise of God, we have not relied upon a cunningly-devised fable. When we rely upon a covenant declaration, it is not a bruised reed which will break beneath our weight, but it is a strong, substantial column which will bear all the load that we can possibly put upon it, so that we may have fullest consolation and good hope through grace by this comfort of the Scriptures.

Let us just think of a few Old Testament passages, and see if they

do not give us great comfort. "I know their sorrows." That is a very old statement of God concerning the children of Israel in Egypt; but it is just as true concerning all our sorrows, they are all known to God. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." That is part of the last message of Moses to the children of Israel; does not that comfort of the Scriptures cheer you? Here is another precious passage: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Do you want me to keep on quoting such precious promises as these? I might do so all night long, for these charming notes of the comfort of the Scriptures are practically without end. Oh, may the Divine Spirit lay some of them home to your troubled hearts, so that, beloved brethren and sisters, you may not only have patience and comfort, but that you may have *the* patience and *the* comfort of the Scriptures!

III. Now I have to speak briefly on the last part of our subject; that is, THE HOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES: "that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have the hope."

You have noticed, I daresay, that the matters which concern our salvation are always spoken of as the objects of faith. A man does not obtain the pardon of his sins by hoping for it; he is not regenerated because he hopes to be born again; justification is not given to him because he hopes for it; all these things are matters of faith, not of hope. We are justified by faith; it is by faith that we receive the forgiveness of our sins. Faith has to do with the past,—with what Christ has accomplished; but hope looks forward to the future. Hope is for those who are saved, and hope comes to us, and is strengthened in us, by the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures.

Well now, brethren, what is the hope which we get, as God enables us to have the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures? Well,—to go over the same three points again,—*it is such a hope as the Scriptures hold forth.* For instance, they hold forth this hope: "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." So, if you have the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, you will be sure about that great and glorious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Your hope will be very bright about that matter, because you will feel sure that we

shall be preserved, upheld, comforted, and rendered triumphant even over the last enemy, which is death, for that he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." That is one hope which the Scripture sets forth to us. Then there is the hope that, after death, will come the resurrection, and eternal life and glory, for that also is part of the hope set forth in the Scriptures, as Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And David said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." And Isaiah said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Albeit that the Old Testament in itself has not the brightness of hope that there is in the New Testament, yet is there enough even there to make us very hopeful for the future; and if you read the whole of the Scriptures through, you will see that the man who, by the patience of the Scriptures is holding on his way, and by the comfort of the Scriptures is cheered in so doing, may have the good hope of final perseverance and of eternal glory.

Then, also, this hope is *such as the Scriptures exhibit.* We have a very beautiful picture of hope in the 11th of the Hebrews, where the apostle describes all those heroes of the faith, and then says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." They all died looking for what they had not seen, but of which they were so sure that they already embraced it. Over their mausoleum we may inscribe the words, "the children of the morning." They had not seen the full light of the day, but they were persuaded of its coming; they watched for it, and spoke of it, and lived and died in expectation of it. You are to have the same kind of hope that Abraham had, of whom our Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." You are to have the same sort of hope that all the patriarchs had when they remained far off from the country from which they had gone out, because, like Abraham, they "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." You are to have a hope like that of Joseph, who died in Egypt, yet gave commandment concerning his bones, that they were not to be left there; for he still claimed his portion, not with Pharaoh, but with his forefathers in the land of promise. I have not time to go through the list of the hopeful spirits of the Old Testament; but I would just remind you that they never hoped to have the inheritance without patiently waiting God's time for them to receive it, and they only hoped to have it through the comfort of the Scriptures which had promised it to them. It must be the same with us; through believing in Christ Jesus our Lord, and relying upon the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God, we also, through the patience of the Scriptures, and the comfort of the Scriptures, shall inherit the hope which is set forth and exhibited in the Scriptures.

Lastly, this is *a hope such as the Scriptures always produce in*

those who believe them, obey them, and follow them. O brethren, if you are patiently fighting the battles of the Lord, determined that nothing shall turn you aside from following the great Captain of your salvation,—if you are resting in the precious blood of Jesus, and the Holy Ghost has wrought in you this determination that, come what may, you will never turn aside from the King's highway of holiness, then I know that you will delight in and seek after all the comforts that are stored up for you in the inspired Word of God. You will prize your Lord's promises, you will observe your Lord's ordinances; above all, you will esteem and love your blessed Lord himself, who is "the Consolation of Israel." You will honour the Divine Spirit, who is *the* Comforter, who brings the comfort of which our text speaks; and when you have thus realized the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, oh, what a hope you will have! You will share the hopes of all the saints, the hopes which stirred their spirits when they died, some of them in anguish at the stake or on the rack, or dragged at the heels of wild horses, or stoned, or sawn asunder, or slain with the sword. You will have the hope with which your godly mother died, the hope with which all those who were in Christ have died. You will have the hope that, when the Master comes, he will find you ready to welcome him;—the hope that, when his throne is set, and his courtiers are gathered around it in the great day of account, you will be there;—and the hope that, for ever, you will be with him where he is, to behold his glory, the glory which the Father has given him. I could not, if I had the tongues of men and of angels, explain and expound all that is included in the hope of patient souls that are comforted by the inspired Word of God. It is a hope full of immortality, and of it the apostle Paul says, when writing to the Hebrews, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This hope we would not part with for ten thousand worlds if we had them; do you not say so, beloved? Oh, let your eyes sparkle at the very thought of this hope: let your hearts dance even at the mere mention of it; let your whole soul be invigorated and kept in tune by this hope,—that, when Jesus comes in his glory, you shall be with him, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.

Now I must send you away with this mournful reflection,—that there are some of you who have no hope. Sometimes, we use the word "hope" very incorrectly. A man dies without any faith in Christ, and someone says, "Well, I hope it is all right with him." I dare not say that; I dare say, "I wish it had been all right with him, I desire that it might have been;" but hope needs solid ground to rest upon if it is to be a good hope. An idle, vain hope is for idle and vain men. A foolish hope is only fit for fools. Sirs, what right have some of you to hope that you will ever get to heaven? If, when you go out of this Tabernacle, you were to turn to the left, and go towards London Bridge, it would be very absurd for you to say that you hoped that, in that way, you would get to Clapham;

and when you turn your faces towards the world, towards self, towards sin, it is idle for you to say, "I hope we shall all meet in heaven." I am sure I wish, with all my heart, that we may; and that means that I hope the Lord will turn your faces heavenward. May the Holy Spirit bring you to repent of sin, to believe in Jesus, to cast yourselves wholly upon him;—may he, by his grace, cut the links which now bind you to the world, and enable you to give yourselves up wholly to Christ, that he may save you! May the Lord do this of his infinite mercy, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS XV. 1—16.

Verse 1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

When we are free from scruples upon any point, and feel that there are things that we may do because we are strong, yet let us not do them if thereby we should grieve others who are weak. Let us think of their infirmities; and whatever liberty we may feel entitled to claim for ourselves, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of other people as well as from our own, that we may bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please ourselves.

2, 3. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ—*

Our Master, and Lord, and great Exemplar: "For even Christ"—

3. *Pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

He took the most trying place in the whole field of battle; he stood where the fray was hottest. He did not seek to be among his disciples as a king is in the midst of his troops, guarded and protected in the time of strife; but he exposed himself to the fiercest part of all the conflict. What Jesus did, that should we who are his followers do, no one of us considering himself, and his own interests, but all of us considering our brethren and the cause of Christ in general.

4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,—*

This is as if somebody had said, "Why, Paul, it was David who said what you just quoted." "Yes," he replies, "I know that I quoted David, but he spoke in his own person concerning his Lord, 'for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.'"

4, 5. *That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation—*

"Comfort" is really the word he used, turning into prayer the thought which had been suggested by his use of the words "patience and comfort." "Now the God of patience and comfort"—

5. *Grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*

"Make you to be unanimous, not concerning that which is evil, but that you may be of one mind in your likeness to Christ Jesus." What a blessed harmony it would be if, not only all in any one church, but all in the whole of the churches were likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus! It will be so when he gathers those who are now scattered; but may we never hope to have it so here on earth? I cannot tell; but, at any rate, let us all strive after it. Let us all endeavour to

pitch our tune according to Christ's keynote; and the nearer we get to that, the less discord there will be in the psalmody of the church. We shall be likeminded with one another when we become likeminded with Christ; but not till then.

6, 7. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because he could see no fault in us, or because he hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! but, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, he welcomed us to his heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another.

8. *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:*

It was to Abraham and his descendants that the promise was made that, in him, and in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. So our Lord came, as a Jew, to be "a minister of the circumcision." Let us never forget that he came to those whom we are apt to forget; and, peradventure, even to despise, "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."

9—12. *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*

There were plain indications, in the Old Testament, that the blessing was meant for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews; but, still, it was made known to the Jews first, and we must never forget that.

13. *Now the God of hope—*

Turn back to the fourth verse, and note the expression, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope;" then read in the fifth verse, "The God of patience and comfort;" and see how Paul here goes back to that last word in the fourth verse, "Now the God of hope"—

13—16. *Fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

Now would have been the time for Paul to say that he had been made a minister "to offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass," if such a thing had been right;—to offer up the daily sacrifice, as the so-called "priests" aver that they now do; but he says nothing of the sort; and even when he represents the Gentiles as being offered up, he does not speak of any sacrifice going therewith, but says that it "might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—852, 734, 746, 848.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

STRANGE DISPENSATIONS AND MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 24TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Lord's-day Evening, in the autumn of 1859.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."—Hosea ii. 14.

THIS is one of the many instances in the Word of God of his free, rich, sovereign grace. The Lord has set the children of Israel before us as a great model. They are our beacons with regard to sin, but they are a pattern to us when we see in them the gracious dealings of a covenant-keeping God. Oft did they rebel, but just as often did the Lord forgive them. Frequently did he smite them with his rod, but he never turned them over to destruction; he still remembered his covenant made with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and he suffered not his faithfulness to fail.

We have, in the prophecy of Hosea, an instance of what God thought of the sins of his people. He commands the prophet to speak in rough earnest language of their constant rebellion; and yet, no sooner has he directed Hosea to deal hardly with his erring spouse, than he seems to stop him in the full career of his furious prophecy, and bids him now address to her words of comfort. This is the connection in which our text is found set in the black letters of the volume of threatenings against guilty Israel. This precious jewel shines all the more brightly in the thick darkness of their sin and despair; this torch of love and kindness sheds a heavenly light, and makes their eyes and hearts rejoice.

Let us now turn to these words of the Lord, and regard them under the following aspects. First, I see, in the text, *the singular reasons for divine grace:* "Therefore, behold!" I see, in the next place, *the strange dispensations of divine grace:* "I will bring her into the wilderness." In the third place, *matchless consolations:* "I will speak comfortably unto her;" and, in the fourth place, *sweet persuasions:* "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

I. In the first place, we have, in our text, THE SINGULAR REASONS FOR DIVINE GRACE: "Therefore, behold!"

It is not without cause that the word "therefore" is here inserted. We are to look to the context to find *what are the premises from which a conclusion of mercy is drawn.* You might naturally conceive, judging according to human logic, that the preceding verses described either Israel's goodness, or else her abject repentance, if she has gone astray and rebelled; but, on the contrary, there is no mention of these things at all. They speak not of her goodness, but of her badness; and, in fact, they speak so strongly, that the prophet uses terms that are never employed except after excessive iniquity. He charges Israel with whoredom, and speaks of her as having committed uncleanness with many lovers. This is strong language, and shows that he means to declare the excessive character of her sin; and instead of speaking of her as being a penitent, he declares that she was still impenitent. Nothwithstanding many, many providences, and the hedging up of her way with thorns, she would break through, and run after her many false lovers. And then, strange to say, contrary to all human reasoning, there comes the inference, if I may so call it,—an inference of sunshine from a dark cloud, an inference of mercy from a whole mass of sin and iniquity. If the inference had been, "Therefore I will destroy her, I will cut her in pieces, and give her children to the sword, and her women to be carried away captive," our reason could well have seen that it was the natural consequence, we could easily have seen that the logical terms agreed; but here it seems as if it were quite a *non sequitur.* How can it be that a "therefore" should spring up, when the previous verses have been filled with a description of her sins?

Here let us pause to remember that *the reasons for God's grace to us are far above all human reason,* for he himself has told us, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Nay, I will go further than this, and say that, not only are God's modes of reasoning far above our own, but *they often seem as if they were even contradictory to ours.* Where we should draw one inference, God draws the very opposite. See yon poor penitent sinner; he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven; but he smote upon his breast, and cried, God be merciful to me a sinner." What is our inference from this, looking at the publican as he stands there? Why, that he is a rebellious creature, and that God cannot and will not accept him, but must punish him. Doth God draw this inference? Nay; for "this man went down to his house justified." See yonder Pharisee; with outstretched hands he stands, and prays thus with himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are," and so on. What is our inference therefrom? Surely God will accept so good a man as this; he will be sure to justify a man so holy and so moral. Not so; for that man went down to his house without justification, unsatisfied, unblessed with the smile of heaven, while yon sorrowing publican received God's gracious forgiveness.

We, ever since the Fall, have learned to reason badly; our reasoning faculty has been as much confused as any other power that we possessed; we have turned aside from the straightforward path, and we know not how to draw the true inference which God draws from our sins. So, then, it seemeth, from our text, that, so far from looking at any reason for mercy to anything that is good in man,—if God ever seeks in the creature a reason why he should show mercy, he looketh not to the good, but to the evil. When we come before God, it would be well if we would always remember this. We are committing great folly if, when we are spreading our case before him, we dare for one moment to speak of ourselves as good or excellent. We shall never succeed in that way; he will not listen to us, for this plan has no power with him; but if, when we come to him, we can plead our sin and our misery, then shall we prevail. Nay, we may even go the length of the psalmist, David, when he prayed, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity;"—and for a strange reason, you would say,—"for it is great." He used the greatness of his sin as an argument why God should have mercy on him. O ye legalists, who are looking to yourselves for some arguments with which to prevail with God; O ye who look to your sacraments, to your outward forms, to your pious deeds and your almsgivings, for something that will move the heart of God; know this, that these things are no lever that can ever move him to love. Nothing but your sin and misery can ever stir his mercy, and you look to the wrong place when you look to your merits to find a plea why he should show pity upon you.

And yet, albeit that this reasoning seems extremely strange, I may use an illustration which will justify such reasoning as this in the mind of every thoughtful man. Here is a poor creature shivering in the cold with nakedness; and there is one who hath warm garments to give away. Will not the nakedness of the man be his claim to benevolence? If there be any generous soul who desireth to feed the hungry, it is not likely that he will bestow his bread upon one that hath abundance; but if he heareth a soul uttering the wail which is excited by the pangs of hunger, that very wail shall make him move his hands to supply the needed food. Generosity, liberality, and mercy know of nothing that can move them as misery can, and the very reverse argument is formed from that which men are so fond of using. They will go to God with a plea analogous to this,—as if a beggar should meet me in the street, and say, "Sir, give me charity; I am not very poor, I am not very hungry, *therefore* give me charity." He would not use such a foolish argument as that. He, like a wise man, saith, "I am hungry, I am starving; *therefore* give me food." Would that ye would use the like sensible argument, when ye come before God, and plead, not for your merit's sake, but for your misery's sake. Think not that you are to tip the arrows of your prayers with the feathers of your own merit; that shall never make them fly to heaven. It will be better if ye can wing them with a sense of your own miseries, for then they shall reach the heart of God, and he will send you the promised blessing in return. Strange reasoning, you say, this of

grace,—that God will save men, not for their goodness, but, if there be any reason that can be found in them, it is rather for their sin and for their misery than for anything good in them.

If you will carefully look at the text again, you will notice that, after the word "therefore" there comes a word of exclamation: "behold!" Whenever we see the word "behold" in Scripture, we may be sure that there is something well worthy of our attention. It strikes me that Hosea, when the Lord commanded him to write this verse, was quite staggered. "Lord," saith he, "how can this be?" He was filled with amazement. "I have been threatening thy children; thou hast told me to set their iniquities before their face, and now thou biddest me say, '*Therefore* I will have mercy upon them.'" The conclusion seemed to him so strange, that he was utterly astonished; and the Lord permitted his servant to record his astonishment by putting in that word "behold."

Nor do I think that is the only reason for the use of the word. It is also, I think, put there that we may admire the grace here displayed, and that we may remember the mercy of God, and especially the deep-rooted secret reasons for that mercy. They will continue to be, on earth, the theme of admiration; and, in heaven itself, the object of eternal astonishment. When we shall be permitted to see why God had mercy upon man, and especially why, out of the human race, he had mercy upon us,—why he chose us while others were suffered to perish,—we shall be compelled incessantly to lift up our hands in astonishment, and even in the heavenly city itself joy shall sometimes be superseded by wonder, and we shall, even there, be astonished to find such matchless grace displayed for such singular reasons. "Therefore, behold!" Again I would say to those who are trusting in themselves,—Give up your foolish hopes. Men and brethren, look not to the empty cisterns; but come away at once to the fountain, the divine, kingly fount of sovereign grace, for there, and there only, it is that your hope of pardon can be realized; for, in yourself, there is nothing but that which would lead to your destruction, and only in Jehovah can reasons for salvation be discovered.

II. The second point is, THE STRANGE DISPENSATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE.

God is about to have mercy upon poor fallen Israel, so what does he say? "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness." This may seem to some a strange way of showing his love, yet it is not an unusual one, for it is the common method by which God manifests his love towards his chosen ones. You will, perhaps, smile when I make the observation that there was nothing which a Roman slave more anxiously desired than to have a box on the ear from his master. "That was a singular desire," you will say; yet that box on the ear was the object of the morning and evening prayer of many a slave in Rome; for, you must know, if a master once gave his servant a box on the ear, he was free from that day forth, and was no longer a slave. Now, that strange manner of manumitting a slave is analogous to that which God uses when he is about to set free one of Satan's bondsmen.

He first of all gives us the blow of *conviction*, and then he gives us the liberty of grace. Is it not singular that God should begin to show his love to his people by taking them into the wilderness? Is it not a strange manifestation of divine favour that he should bring us, not into Canaan, not to the grapes of Eshcol, not to all the riches of the land which flowed with milk and honey, but that he should bring us, first of all, into the wilderness? Your experience, if you are a child of God, will help you to understand this. "The wilderness" may be explained thus:—when God is about to save a man, he first of all brings him into *a state of spiritual destitution*. He thinks himself rich and increased in goods, and that he has need of nothing; talk to him about the sinful state of a natural man, and he is insulted; he says he is as good as his neighbours, he does not know that he has much to confess when he is on his knees; indeed, he hardly sees the use of confessing to God at all. If such as he do not get to heaven at last, he does not know who will! Now, when God means to have mercy upon a man of that sort, instead of feeling that he has every virtue and all strength, on a sudden he finds himself without one good thing to recommend him to God; and, worse than this, he finds that he has no strength to perform a single good act. "Oh!" saith he, "I once thought I could repent and believe whenever I pleased; but, now, all my strength is gone, my heart is hard, and I can scarcely compel a tear to flow. I imagined that, in the last moment of my life, I could say, 'O God, have mercy upon me!' and that, then, I should be saved; but, now, I find faith to be quite another thing from what I thought it was. Now I am stripped of all self-confidence, my comeliness is departed, I must robe myself in sackcloth, and cast dust and ashes upon my head; my soul is spiritually shut up, I find no food, nothing comes from within, and nothing comes from without." This state of spiritual destitution is set forth by this wilderness state.

Moreover, by the wilderness, doubtless, is meant *affliction*, for, full often, when God means to bring a man to himself, he sends affliction upon him. This is the good Shepherd's black dog with which he brings his wandering sheep back to him; it comes howling after us, and biting at our heels, and then we fly away to Christ. How many there are, among you, who were first brought to repentance by the loss of your property, or the death of someone dear to you! If everything had gone on smoothly, the stream would have wafted you along down to the gulf of black despair; but, on a sudden, the flood boiled around you, and the tempest gathered above your devoted head; then you cried unto God in your trouble, your losses were more than recompensed, your God was found, and your soul was saved. Happy are you who lose a fortune to find a Saviour! Blessed is the burial of a friend, or relative, that leads to the new birth of our own souls, and brings us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! We have, many of us, great cause to bless that rough right hand of God which has smitten us so sternly, but which has always been moved with love whenever it hath given us a blow of chastisement.

Further, I think this wilderness may mean, not only spiritual destitution, and affliction, but also *loneliness*. When God means to save a man, he always makes that man to feel himself to be all alone. There was a time with me, I know, when I went up to the house of God, and I knew not whether there was anyone else there while the sermon was being delivered. I seemed to be shut in by a black wall while the minister's eye appeared to be looking down into my soul. I believed that the good man meant me when he used the word sinner; I could not think he was referring to anybody else. I loved not society, but was always seeking solitary places for prayer, trying to draw near to God in prayer, to tell him my wants, and to ask for his mercy. It is a happy sign when the divine Hunter singleth out one from the herd. He looketh round, singleth out his prey, and hunts him, until, at last, he brings him down, and carries him home rejoicing. The deer, when wounded, retires to weep, and bleed, and die alone; and so, too, hearts when wounded love shady solitudes, that they may weep alone before God. This is, I believe, the meaning of "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness."

I will give you one more picture, and then I think I shall have described this wilderness sufficiently. Can you, for a moment, imagine yourself taken away, on a sudden, and carried by some giant hand swiftly through the air, and deposited in the midst of the Desert of Sahara? You look around you, and there is nothing to be seen that can afford you hope. Above you is the burning vault of heaven, with the furnace sun sending forth its fire upon you. Beneath you is the arid sand, with no track of a traveller anywhere. At first, you rush on, hoping soon to find the desert's verge, and to escape. Night succeeds day, and in the thick darkness you still travel on, fear and hope together winging your feet. Day dawns again, but you are as far from deliverance as ever; and I can imagine that, with your throat parched, and with your soul melted within you, you would cast yourself down upon the sand, and cry, "Lost, lost, lost!" The echo of your words would come back to you from the burning heaven above you, and you would be the complete picture of despair,—lost, lost, lost! Yet this is where God brings the man whom he means to save. He puts him into such a position that, above him, seems to be an angry God; beneath him, a desert of sin, and not a glimpse of hope; and he lies down, helpless and despairing, and cries, "Lost, lost, lost!" My hearer, art thou in such a position? Then, remember that the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost, and that thou art one of those whom he came to save, for thou art manifestly lost. He will never be disappointed with the result of his work; those whom he came to save, he will save; and if thou dost trust him, he will save thee, thou shalt be brought in among his redeemed people here on earth, and thou shalt see his face, and rejoice in his great salvation, in the day when he shall come in the glory of his Father with all his holy angels with him.

III. Now, note the next division of the passage,—GOD'S MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS.

Does he bring her into the wilderness that she may be the prey of the vultures, or that the jackals may devour her? Oh, no! He brings her there that he may "speak comfortably unto her." You see how the two things go together. There is a precious golden band in the text,—a band which neither death nor hell can ever shatter, which, like a sacred rivet or heavenly link, joins the two sentences together. "I will bring her into the wilderness,"—that is true, we know;—"and I will speak comfortably unto her," that is true also. The two are linked together, and cannot be separated. Those that are brought into such a wilderness as I have described, shall hear the comforting words of Jehovah spoken to their hearts.

Now, with regard to these comforts, I would remark that they are *sure comforts*. We may take the words, "I will," which stand at the beginning of the verse, as relating to each clause, and therefore we may read it, "I *will* speak comfortably unto her." Therefore we have, first of all, sure mercies,—"I *will*." Good old Joseph Irons used to say, "Our *shalls* and *wills* are impotent and impracticable, but God's *shalls* and *wills* are omnipotent." Hath he said it, and shall it not be done? Hath he decreed it, or promised it, and shall it not stand fast? Rest assured, poor soul, that whatever may not be or whatever may be, if thou art brought into the wilderness by God, he will assuredly speak comfortably unto thee there. It may be a long while that thou wilt have to wait; but, though the promise tarry, wait for it, for the time for its fulfilment shall surely come, it shall not fail. In due season, the Lord will remember thee, and will not forget thee in thy low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever, and his faithfulness knows no end. He will speak comfortably unto thee.

Note, next, that they are not only sure consolations, but *divine consolations:* "*I* will speak comfortably unto her." Many ministers have tried what they could do to cheer the sad, but they have done nothing. I have never learnt so much of my own weakness as when, in preaching, I have sought to comfort some of God's tried ones. I have sometimes, in my sermons, put in a little honey on purpose for them; but, somehow, that honey has seemed to ferment and become sour, so that they could not feed upon it. I have talked with them, and done all I could to comfort them; and, sometimes, I have had to turn them over to my brethren in the eldership, and they have done their best, and failed. What, then, shall I say, Lord? Thy poor servant can do nothing here; wilt thou do it, Lord? Wilt thou, O blessed Spirit, who art the Comforter, take them by the hand, and "speak comfortably" unto them? If thou dost speak, they cannot refuse to hear, and then shall they indeed be comforted. O poor, tried soul, is not this a rich promise, indeed? "I will speak comfortably unto her." He will not merely send thee an angel or minister to comfort thee, but he will himself do the work: "*I* will speak comfortably unto her."

The third remark I make upon these consolations is, that they are *effectual consolations*. The Hebrew bears the interpretation, "I will speak *to her heart*." We speak to your ears, but God speaks to your heart. Oh, what speaking that is, when God speaks right from

his heart into our hearts! Some of us have experienced this at times. We have found the Word of God to well up, as it were, from him; and then, as it has welled up, it has gone down deep into our hearts, and we have been made to drink of it to the very full. "I will speak to her heart." Poor soul, if thou art brought into the wilderness, God will effectually comfort thee. He has effectually convicted thee, and he will effectually console thee. If he has brought thee into the wilderness of humility and sore distress, he will as surely bring thee into the Canaan of faith and joy.

I remark, in the next place, that these consolations are not only sure, divine, and effectual, but they are *full:* "I will speak comfortably unto her." What rich words of comfort are those which God addresses to his people! He pardons them, he justifies them, he sanctifies them, he preserves them, he upholds them, he prevents them, he brings them safely home at last; and all this he speaks to the heart of the poor, tried, and tempted soul in the wilderness, and thus he makes it "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It is not in my power, my dear friends, to speak to your hearts, I can only speak to your outward ear; but let me repeat some of those things which God says when he speaks to the heart. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus God speaks rich promises of pardon, and anon he says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." How sweetly he speaks concerning the trials and troubles of this world! "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." And how graciously he tells his people, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And how comfortably does he remind his people that, come what may, they shall still be secure! "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And then, when his poor people think he can hardly remember them, he says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." And then, lest even this should be of no avail, he says, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Truly did I speak, when I remarked that this con-

solation is full, and well doth one of our poets express the same sentiment when he says,—

> "What more can he say than to you he hath said,
> You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

We have a Bible that cannot be enlarged; we have promises that cannot be extended; we have blessings that cannot be exaggerated; and imagination's utmost stretch could not make us conceive of anything beyond. Oh! may God, who hath brought you into the wilderness of sore trouble, bring each one now present into his gracious presence, that you may know that he himself thus speaks comfortably unto you!

IV. Now I close by coming back to the first clause of the text, and meditating on THE SWEET PERSUASIONS with which God draws us to himself: "I will allure her."

There are many who are very much afraid they are not converted, because they have not had a thunder-and-lightning experience; they were not converted in stormy weather; they had not the terrors of the law, and the shakings over hell's mouth that some have experienced. They have read of John Bunyan and his desperate struggles, but they have not gone through anything of the kind. They can say that they have felt their need of a Saviour, and realized their sin; but the accounts they have heard of what others have known of the terrors of hell have been so impressed upon them that they have feared that they could not be God's people. Read our text; it says, "I will allure her." It does not say, "I will drive her;" it does not say, "I will drag her;" it does not even say, "I will compel her;" it does not say, "I will make her to run into the wilderness for fear of me." No; but the Lord says, "I will allure her."

What does this mean? I cannot explain it better than by a very simple figure. I see the fowlers come, sometimes, to Clapham Common. I once saw a man with a robin redbreast in a cage. This poor little bird was made to sing, and so tried to decoy other birds from the sky. The fowler was luring birds, catching them by the lure; and, my brethren, this is how God brings many of his children to himself. We have all been like wild birds; but he has converted some of us by his grace, and put us into the cage of the pulpit, and made us sing as best we can, so as to lure poor sinners to come to the divine Fowler, the Lord Jesus Christ. I wish I could sing better; I would that I were a better decoy, that I might bring more to Jesus. Many a sister has been a decoy to her brother; many a wife has lured her husband to Christ. You cannot drag them, but you may draw them. All that you can do, in your daily life, and in your house, or wherever else you may meet with these poor worldlings, is to lure them to Christ by letting them hear how sweetly you sing, and see how happy you are, even while you are, as they say, a poor caged bird. Let them see how you enjoy your liberty in Christ, and so seek, with all earnestness, to bring them also to the Saviour.

There is another figure which will explain the Lord's words, "I

will allure her." When your little children are learning to walk, they are set up by the side of the table. They are quite frightened at first, for they have hardly tried their little legs yet. The nurse desires that the child may walk a little way. Well, what does she do? She holds out an apple, or a sweetmeat, to tempt it; and it tries to come to her, but it is ready to fall; so the nurse's finger is held out, and the child is supported. It rests a moment, and it is lured on again with some toy or picture, something that tempts it on; and thus it learns to walk. Possibly you say that I ought not to use such a simple figure. Nay, but I ought, for it is used in Scripture: "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms," just as a father might hold up his little one by the arms, and let its feet just lightly touch the ground. The Lord condescendeth thus to speak, and surely I may do the same. May not a man speak thus with his fellows? Yes; surely, this is the way in which God brings many of his children to Christ. He lures them; he does not thunder forth, and frighten them; but he tempts them on by mercies and baits of heavenly pleasure, and so are they drawn to the cross of Christ.

Some have been lured by the sweetness of the character of Christ. They have taken his yoke upon them, because he is "meek and lowly in heart," and they have found rest unto their souls. Others have been lured by the blessings of religion. They have said, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and have said to the people of God, "We will go with you." Many have been lured by the prospect of heaven, and the joy which has been set before them; and they have counted their lives as less than nothing in order that they might first suffer the reproach of Christ, and then inherit his glory. Do not be cast down because you have not had this terrible experience. Perhaps you are among those whom God sweetly lured to himself.

So I conclude my discourse by bidding every Christian here to go forth, and endeavour to lure poor souls to Christ. You must alter the shape of that face of yours that is so long and miserable. You are not luring souls to Christ; you are doing quite the reverse, you will drive them away from him. Put away, I beseech you, that constant habit of murmuring and grumbling at everything and everybody; come, take your harp down from the willows, and sing us one of the songs of Zion. Let us have no more groaning; that will frighten away the poor wild birds. They see your misery, and how can they be lured to come when they see you so unhappy? I do think that the long faces of God's people do a good deal of mischief. I see nothing to cause them, but just the reverse. Our Lord Jesus says that the hypocrites are of a sad countenance, so I should not like to have a sad countenance, for fear any man should think me a hypocrite. What does he further say? "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Do not let the worldling know that you are fasting; if you have troubles, keep them within you, do not let him know of them;

let him see a happy exterior. In this way, you will allure him to Christ; and take care, by the gentleness and kindness of your conversation, to bring him to think of that religion which he has hitherto rejected. I have heard it related of some Methodist that, after praying a long while for his wife's conversion, he threatened to beat her if she were not converted in a certain time. I believe she was not converted; that was not the way to bring her to the Saviour. Instead of wooing sinners, and alluring them, there are some who, if they do not go to the length of physical force, nevertheless seem as if they would bully them to Christ, they speak to them so sharply and sternly. There is never any good done in that way. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and more souls are brought to Christ by sweet words than by sour and bitter ones. Let our life be like that of Christ,—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;"—and then, added to this, let us have a heavenly cheerfulness about us which will lead others to see that, though our religion takes away from us the pleasures of the wicked, it gives us something so much better that Isaac Watts was right when he said—

> **"Religion never was design'd**
> **To make our pleasures less."**

Go, beloved, and lure others to Christ; and may God the Holy Spirit bless each one of you! If in the wilderness, may he speak comfortably unto you; if hardened in your sin, may he bring you into the wilderness; and if he hath already spoken comfortably to you, may he help you to speak comfortably to others! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE IX. 51—56.

Verse 51. *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

It is a very remarkable expression that is here used: "when the time was come that he should be received up." It does not say "that he should depart," or "that he should die." It overleaps that, and speaks only of his glorious ascension into heaven. When that time was drawing near,—and, of course, his death would come before it,—Christ "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," where he knew that he should die upon the cross.

52, 53. *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

And, of course, Jerusalem was a sort of rival of Samaria; and if he was going there to worship, they did not want him to stay with them. Yet the Samaritans were believers in the first five Books of the Bible; they accepted the Pentateuch, and they ought therefore to have practised hospitality, imitating Abraham's noble example. They erred both against their own Scriptures and against the dictates of humanity when they refused to receive Christ because he was on his way to Jerusalem.

54. *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

James and John, two of the most loving of Christ's disciples, John the most loving of all, startle us all by failing in the matter of love, and so being as bad as the Samaritans themselves. I have often noticed that very "liberal-minded" people, who denounce bigotry in general, do it with about seven times as much bigotry as those who are out-and-out bigots. In fact, it is a wonderfully easy thing to be a bigot against all bigotry, and to be illiberal towards everybody except fellow-liberals. Well, that is a pity; it is better far to have the spirit of Christ, even when the Samaritans refuse to exercise hospitality. At any rate, let them live.

You notice that John quotes the example of Elijah; and this should teach us that the best men mentioned in Scripture did things which we may not copy, and that they did some things rightly which it would be wrong for us to do. Under special inspiration of God, Elijah, the prophet of fire, may call down fire from heaven; but you and I must not do so; we are not sent for any such purpose. Let us, therefore, be cautious how we make even prophets our exemplars in everything,

55, 56. *But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

If that principle had been always remembered, and followed, there would have been no persecution. To cause a man to suffer in his person, or in his estate, because of his religious opinions, be they what they may, is a violation of Christianity. Consciences belong to God alone; and it is not for us to be calling for fire, the stake, the rack, or imprisonment, for men because they do not believe as we do. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

56. *And they went to another village.*

That was the easiest thing for them to do, and a great deal better than calling for fire from heaven upon anybody. If one village would not receive them, another would; and if you cannot get on with one person, get on with somebody else. Do not grow angry with people; that is not the way to make them better. To fight God's battles with the devil's weapons is generally, in the end, to fight the devil's battles on his behalf; let none of us make such a mistake as that.

FROM "NOTICES OF BOOKS" IN NOVEMBER "SWORD AND TROWEL":—

Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have published six more sets of their Twelve Sermons' Series, by C. H. SPURGEON, on the following subjects:—Grace Abounding, The Atonement, Decision, Sanctification, Obedience, and To Young Men. There are now 48 different sets of Sermons issued in this handy form at 1s. each, or post free for 1s. 2d. Friends should send for a specimen copy, with list of the whole, as they are exceedingly useful for presents to all sorts and conditions of persons under all manner of circumstances.

John Ploughman's Talk, by C. H. SPURGEON, will soon be on sale in paper covers at sixpence. No other book by Mr. Spurgeon has had such a large circulation as this one; and at this low price it ought to reach a still wider constituency, to whom its homely, proverbial advice, instruction, and warning should be as acceptable and as helpful as they have been in the past.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MUST HE?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 1ST, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 27th, 1879.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."—Luke xix. 5.

I THINK this is the only instance in which our Lord invited himself to anybody's house. He often went when he was bidden; but this time, if I may use the expression, he did the bidding himself. Usually, we must seek the Lord if we want to find him. To the eye, at any rate, the apparent work of grace goes on in this way;—a man begins to cry for mercy, as the blind man, who heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, cried to him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." But God is so rich in grace that he does not restrict himself to this usual method. Generally, he is found of them that seek him; but, sometimes, he is found of them that seek him not. Yea, if I tell the whole truth, if you go down to the bed-rock of actual fact, it is always God who seeks sinners. He always calls them a people who are not a people; and the first movement, between God and the sinner, is never on the sinner's part, but on God's part. Still, apparently, men begin to pray to God, and begin to seek the Lord; and this is the usual order in which salvation comes to them. The prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my father;" "and he arose, and came to his father." The blind man cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Our text, however, describes a case which shows the freeness of divine mercy; for, although Zacchæus did not invite Christ to his house, Christ invited himself. Though there was no asking him to be a guest, much less any pressing entreaty on the part of Zacchæus, Christ pressed himself upon him, and said to him, "Make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." I reckon that there are some here who are on an errand something like that of Zacchæus. They want, perhaps, to see the preacher.

which is not nearly so good a thing as wanting to see the preacher's Master. Still, that curiosity has brought them into the place where Jesus of Nazareth is wont to come; and I do pray that he may find many to whom he will say, "Make haste, and come and receive me; for I must abide, this very night, with you, and dwell in your house and heart at this time and for ever."

I. The first thing I am going to talk about is, THE DIVINE NECESSITY WHICH PRESSED UPON THE SAVIOUR. He says, "I must." "To-day I must abide at thy house."

I do not think of this so much as a necessity upon Zacchæus as upon Christ. You know that he felt this "must" at other times. In John iv. 4, we read, "He must needs go through Samaria." There was a sacred necessity that he should go that way. The most notable instance of all was when "Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." In this case, the "must" was of another kind; he must abide in the house of Zacchæus. What necessity was this which pressed so urgently upon our blessed Master? There were many other houses in Jericho beside that of the tax-gatherer. I daresay there were other persons who would, apparently, have been more suitable hosts for the Lord Jesus Christ; yet it was not really so. There was a mighty pressure upon him who is the omnipotent Lord of all. Necessity was laid upon him who is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." He was his own Master, yet he must do something to which he was constrained by an urgent necessity; he must go and lodge that night nowhere else but at the house of Zacchæus. What did this "must" mean?

I answer, first, it was *a necessity of love*. Our Lord Jesus wanted to bless somebody; he had seen Zacchæus, and he knew what his occupation was, and what his sin was, and he felt that he must bless him. As he looked at him, he felt as a mother does concerning her child when it is ill, and she must nurse it; or as you might feel concerning a starving man, whom you saw to be ready to expire with hunger, and you felt that you must feed him; or as some men have felt when they have seen a fellow-creature drowning, and they have plunged in to save him. They did not stop to think, they dared to do the brave deed without a thought, for they felt that they "must" do it. The compulsions of charity, the necessities of benevolence,—these urgent things laid violent hands upon them, so they must do it. Thus Jesus felt—only in a much higher sense,—that he must bless Zacchæus. He must go to his house, that he might enter his heart, to abide there, and to make Zacchæus holy and happy henceforth and for ever. And he is the same Christ now that he was then; he is not less loving, he is the same gracious Saviour, and he feels the same necessity, the same hunger after souls, the same thirst of love to bless the sons of men; and I, therefore, hopefully expect that there will be, even in this place, and, I hope, in many other parts of the world, some of whom it will be true that the Lord Jesus Christ must come to their house

and heart. So, this was a necessity arising out of our Saviour's divine benevolence and love.

Next, I think it was *a necessity of his sovereignty:* "I must abide at thy house." Here were scribes, and Pharisees, and all sorts of people round about him, who were saying, "He is a prophet; he has opened a blind man's eyes; and he must, therefore, as a prophet, be entertained by some notable Pharisee. Some very respectable person must find him a lodging to-night." But our Lord Jesus Christ seems to say, "I cannot be bound; I will not be fettered; I must exert my own will; I must display my sovereignty; and though these people will all murmur, I cannot help that. Zacchæus, I will come and stay with you, just to show them that I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

You see, this man was in bad odour;—we are not very fond of tax-gatherers here; but, in the East, they like them still less than we do; and, among the Jews, a tax-gatherer, if he was himself a Jew, who came to collect an obnoxious impost by a foreign power upon a people who thought that they were the people of God, and ought to be free, was a man who was intensely hated for having stooped to become one of the farmers of taxes; and if he was the head-farmer, the chief contractor of customs, as Zacchæus was, he had a very bad name indeed. People did not cultivate his acquaintance; they seldom dropped in to tea at his house; and, as a general rule, they fought very shy of him. When they mentioned sinners, they always reckoned that Zacchæus, who had made a fine thing out of the business they specially loathed, and was reputed to be very rich, was one of the very worst; nobody thought much of him. I think, too, that he had been excommunicated by a law of the Sanhedrim, for the publicans were generally regarded as excommunicated persons;—shut out, certainly, from the society of more respectable people.

Besides, to my mind, Zacchæus was an eccentric sort of body. That running of his was a very strange action for such a man; wealthy men, even though they happen to be short of stature, do not generally take to running through the streets, and climbing trees. I should think Zacchæus was the sort of man who kept himself to himself; and who, when he meant to do a thing, would do it; and if it was to climb a tree, as a boy might, he did not mind that, for he had got beyond caring for public opinion. He was an oddity;—he may have been a very good sort of fellow, in some respects; but it is quite clear that he was an odd sort of person. So our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to say, "I will show these people that, when I save men, it is not because they stand well in society, or because they enjoy an excellent repute, or because there are some beautiful points in their character. I will save this odd man, this Zacchæus, this despised tax-gatherer. I must have him; he is just the sort of man in whom I can best display the sovereignty of my grace." To this day, men cannot bear that doctrine. Free will suits them very well, but free grace does not. They would not let Christ choose his own wife; I say it with the utmost reverence.

I mean, they would not let him have the choice of his own bride, his church; but say that must be left to the will of men. But Christ will have his way, whatever they may say. He has a sacred determination, in his blessed heart, that he will do as he pleases; and so, for that reason, he says to Zacchæus, "I *must* abide at thy house."

Our Lord Jesus was also under another necessity, *he wanted someone in whom he could display the great power of his grace.* He needed a sinner, to begin with; that was to be the raw material out of which he was going to make a saint, and a saint of a very special character. Is there a Christian in this place who comes up to the standard of Zacchæus after he was converted? I do not wish to be censorious, but I doubt if there is one. Is there anybody here who gives away half his income to the poor? I think that was going a long way in grace in the matter of almsgiving; and then remember that he was but a babe in grace when he did that; so what he did when he grew older, I do not know. But the first day he was born to Christ, he was a saint of that kind; so, what kind of a saint he grew to be by-and-by, I can scarcely imagine. Lord, out of what material didst thou make such a generous soul as this? Why, out of a grasping, grinding tax-gatherer, who sought to grab all he could lay his hands on! The mighty grace of God, better than a magic wand, opened his closed heart, and made it gush forth like a fountain flowing in a thousand generous streams. Jesus seems to say, "I must have Zacchæus, so that the men of the world may see what I can make out of the most unlikely material;—how I can take coarse pebbles from the brook, and transmute them into diamonds;—how I can bedeck my crown with jewels of the first water, which were originally but as the common stones of the street." I wonder whether there is anybody here, who feels that he has not anything at all in him that is any good whatever. If so, the Lord could say, "I will make something of that man that will cause all who know him to marvel. I will make his wife wonder what has changed him; I will make all his children say, 'What has come over father?' I will make the whole parish say, 'What a miracle! What a miracle!'" This was the kind of "must" that was laid upon our Saviour, and I hope such a "must" is laid upon him now.

There was one more "must" upon him, namely, he must abide in the house of Zacchæus *because Zacchæus was to be his host at Jericho.* Even the Saviour must be lodged somewhere; and, in most places, his Father had appointed some gracious spirit to entertain him, and Zacchæus was to be his host that day; and if he ever came that way again, I feel certain that he would go to his old quarters. Blessed be my Master's dear name, he still has some hosts left where the guestchamber is always ready for him! In every town, and village, and hamlet, there is some house where there is a prophet's chamber; and if you were to ask, "Is there anybody here who will entertain the Lord Jesus Christ?" you would soon find people who would be glad to have his company. Perhaps there is a large upper room, furnished and prepared, where they might break bread together; or a little room, where two or three might meet with

Jesus, a place that never seems so bright as when there are a few praying people met together in it. The Lord must be entertained in this world, and Zacchæus was to be the man to entertain him in Jericho.

Who is the one here now who will take Jesus in? A stranger from the country, perhaps; there is no preaching-place in your village, the gospel is not often proclaimed within miles of the place where you live, and few people go to hear it when it is preached. That is all the more reason why Jesus must come to your house, for he means to have your best room, or that old shed of yours, or that big barn, that the gospel may be preached there. There is a divine necessity laid upon him to have your heart for himself, so that he may come and dwell with you, and make your house his headquarters, whence his disciples may go forth to attack the enemy where you live, and that all in your region may know that the true Salvation Army has come there, and that the Captain of our salvation has himself come to make his abode in your house and your heart.

There is plenty of room for enlargement upon this point, but we must go on to the next one.

II. So, secondly, LET US ENQUIRE WHETHER THERE IS SUCH A NECESSITY IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. Has the Lord Jesus Christ any necessity to come and stay at your house, to come and abide in your heart? I can answer that question best by putting to you a few enquiries.

First, *are you willing to receive Christ at once?* Then, there is a necessity laid upon him to come to you, for he never sent the will into a man without also sending his grace with the will; indeed, the willingness to receive him is the proof of the working of his grace. Dost thou long and sigh that Christ might be thine? Then, thou shalt surely have him. Art thou earnestly anxious to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ? Then thou mayest have that great blessing at once. Are you thirsting after righteousness? Then you shall be filled; for what saith the Scripture? "Let him that is athirst come;" and lest anybody should say, "Oh! but there is some preparation implied in that word thirst, and I am afraid that I do not thirst enough;" what does the Scripture further say? "And whosoever will,—whosoever will,—let him take the water of life freely."

Next, *wilt thou heartily receive Jesus?* Zacchæus "received him joyfully;" and if thou wilt do the same, then he must abide at thy house. I think I hear somebody say, "Receive him joyfully? Ah! that I would if he would but come to me. I would give all I have to have Christ as my Saviour, to have the new life implanted within me, and to have Jesus dwelling in my heart. I would be willing to live, or willing to die, if I might but have him as mine." So you will receive him joyfully, will you? Ah, then! he is bound to come to you. When the door of your heart is opened, Jesus will not be long before he enters. He will stand and knock even at a closed door; therefore, I am sure that he will enter an open one. It is written of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened;" and her

heart was not long open before the Lord entered it; and if yours is open to Christ, that is a proof that you are one of those in whom he must abide at this time.

Let me ask you another question. *Will you receive Christ, whatever the murmurers may say?* Suppose he comes to you, they will begin to murmur, as they did when he went to be the guest of Zacchæus. I do not know where you live, but those around you will be sure to find fault both with you and with your Lord, too. "They all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." So, you see, they were murmuring at Zacchæus as well as at Christ, and you will have the same sort of treatment when you receive Christ. Those who used to say, "You are a fine fellow," when they find that you have become a Christian, will call you a mean-spirited wretch. As long as you give them something to drink, they will say what a jolly dog you are; but as soon as ever you have done with their ways, you will be literally like a dog to them, and they will have nothing for you but kicks and curses. In more respectable society, you know how they give a Christian the cold shoulder. Nothing is actually said, but there is a very clear intimation that your room is preferred to your company when you once become a Christian. Can you bear that? Can you dare that? Because, if Christ comes to your house and heart, you must expect that he will bring his cross with him. Are you willing to have Christ, cross and all; and to say, "Let the murmurers say what they will, and do what they will, my mind is made up, Christ for me, Christ for me; I cannot give him up"?

Further, *will you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord?* Zacchæus did so, for he said, "Behold, Lord." Now, are you willing to give up all to Christ, and to let him be Lord over you? Are you willing to do what he bids you, as he bids you, when he bids you, and simply because he bids you? For, verily, I say unto you, you cannot have Christ for your Saviour unless you also have him as your Lord. He must rule over us as well as forgive us; as one of our poets says,—

> "Yet know, nor of the terms complain,
> Where Jesus comes, he comes to reign;
> To reign, and with no partial sway;
> Thoughts must be slain that disobey."

Sins must be given up, evil practices must be forsaken, you must follow after holiness, and endeavour in all things to imitate your Saviour, who has left you an example that you should follow his steps. Are you ready for that? Because, if you are, then Christ is ready to abide at your house, and to dwell in your heart.

Once more, *will you be prepared to defend him?* If Jesus comes to a house, it becomes the duty of the host to defend him. So Zacchæus, not in boasting, but as a kind of answer to the sneers of the murmurers, when they said that Christ had gone to dwell with a sinner, seemed to say, "But I am no longer a sinner, as I used to be. If I have wronged anybody, I will restore it fourfold; and, henceforth, the half of my income shall be given in alms to the poor." That was the best defence he could give, and Christ must be defended by the changed lives of his disciples. You must so

live that, when men attempt to attack the Saviour, they may be compelled to say, "Well, after all, that man is the better for being a Christian." Your children may rail at religion, but they will be compelled to say, "We could speak against Christ and Christians generally, but when we think of how our mother lived, and how she died, our tongues are silenced. Then, there is our old nurse, who feared the Lord;—many a joke did we crack about her religion; but, ah! there was something about her that was so heavenly that we were obliged to believe in the reality of it whether we would or not." Yes, dear friends, if the Lord Jesus Christ should come to your house, you must say, "It shall be my heart's ambition, as long as I live, to defend his cause by the holiness of the character which I trust his Holy Spirit will work in me." If this is the case with any of you, then he must abide at your house to-night. God grant that he may do so!

III. Now I must close by reminding you of WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF CHRIST COMES TO ABIDE IN YOUR HOUSE.

First, *you must be ready to meet objections at home.* You who say that you are willing to receive my Master, are you quite sure that you know what that reception involves? Christ says that he wishes to abide at your house, and that he must do so; and you say, "Yes, my Lord, I gladly welcome thee to my heart and my home." But stay a moment, my friend; have you asked your wife about that matter? You know that you must not bring home strangers; she will be down upon you if you do; have you counted the cost of your decision? And, my good woman, you say, "I want to bring Christ home with me." Have you asked your husband about it? Sometimes, a dear child says, "Jesus Christ shall abide with me;" but what will father say? For, alas! often, the father is at enmity against God. If that is the case in your home, are you prepared to endure hardness for Christ's sake? Our Lord himself said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household;" and it is often so. David said to Jonathan, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?" Suppose that is your experience, can you keep true to Christ under such circumstances? Can you say, "I love my wife; I love my child; I love my father; but I love Jesus more than all of them; and I must have Christ in my heart, and in my house, even if it brings war there"? Ah! then, he will come to your house if that be your resolve; but if not, he will not come to take the second place. He will not come there if you turn coward at the first jest that is made against you, or the first hard thing that is spoken against your Lord; but he will come to your house if, despite all rebuffs and rebukes, you are determined that he shall make his abode with you.

But, next, *is your house fit for him to enter, and abide there?* I know some houses where my Lord could not lodge for a single night, the table, the talk, the whole surroundings would be so uncongenial to him. Are you prepared, then, to put away everything that would displease him, and to have your house cleansed of all that is evil? You cannot expect the Lord Jesus to come into your house if you invite the devil to come, too. Christ would not remain in

the same heaven with the devil; as soon as ever Satan sinned, he hurled him out of the holy place; he could not endure to have a sinful spirit, the spirit of evil, there; and he will not come and live in your house if you make provision for the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and all those evil things that he abhors. Are you prepared, by his grace, to make a clean sweep of these things? He will not come to you on any other terms.

Further, *we must admit none who would grieve our Guest.* It is hard to lodge with some people because their children are so badly behaved. My Lord loves not to dwell in families where Eli is at the head of the household, and where the children and young people live as they like; but if he comes to your house, he will want you to be like Abraham, of whom he said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." If he comes to your house, you must ask him to come in the same way that he came to the house of the jailor at Philippi. How was that? I have often heard half of that passage quoted without the context: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" Many leave out those last three words, "and thy house;" but what a mercy it is when all in the house, as well as the head of the family, have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you not wish that it may be so in your house? Do you not ardently desire it? I trust that you do.

Once more, *when the Lord Jesus Christ comes into your house, you must entertain him.* He wants no riches at your hands, yet he wants the best that you have. What is the best that you have? Why, your heart, your soul! Give him your heart, give him your life, give him your very self. If you had to entertain the Queen,—if she had promised to come and spend an evening with you,—I will warrant that you would be fidgeting and worrying for weeks about what you should get for such an occasion; and if you have but little means, you would try to get the very best that you could.

I frequently used to go and preach in a country place, where I stayed at a farm; and the dear old man, who lived there, used to have about a hundred pounds of beef, at the very least, on his table; and when, year after year, I noticed such enormous joints, I said to him, one day, "You must have a very curious idea of my appetite; it is not possible that I should ever get through these masses of meat that you put on your table." "Oh!" he replied, "we get through it all very easily, after you are gone, for there are plenty of poor people, and plenty of farm labourers round about, and they soon clear it up." "But," I enquired, "why do you have so much when I come?" "Bless you, sir," he answered, "I would give you a piece as big as a house if I could get it,—I would, indeed,—just to show you how welcome you are to my home." I understood what he meant, and appreciated his kindness; and, in a far higher sense, let us all do as much as ever we possibly can to show the Lord Jesus how welcome he is to our heart and our home.

How welcome he ought always to be when he comes, as our blessed Saviour, to put away our sin, and change our nature, and honour us

with his royal company, and keep and preserve us even to the end, that he may take us up, and our children, too, to dwell at his right hand for ever! Oh, there ought to be grand entertainment for such a Guest as he is! Where is the man who is going to ask him home to-night? Here stands my Master, and in his name I ask,—who will take him home to-night? With whom shall Jesus lodge to-night? "Oh!" says one, "if he would but come to me, I would be glad enough to welcome him." He is glad enough to come, for he delights to be entertained in human hearts. O you soldiers, over there, with the red coats on,—I am always glad to see you here,—shall Jesus Christ abide with you to-night? And you others, in black coats, or in coloured dresses, shall Jesus Christ abide with you to-night? You good friends who are up from the country, if you have not taken Christ into your hearts, will you not take him in now? I cannot hear what you say, but he can; and if this be the reply, "God be merciful to me a sinner, and come and lodge with me to-night," it shall be done, and his shall be the praise.

Now the time has gone, but I must say just these few words more. I recollect that, when I was crying to God for mercy, and I could get no answer to my supplication, so that I feared I must really give up prayer as hopeless, the thought which kept me praying was this, "Well, if I do not get salvation, I shall perish." I seemed to fancy that the Lord had kept me waiting;—that was only my foolish way of thinking, and it was not true;—but I said to myself, "If the Lord keeps me waiting, I also kept him waiting a long while. Was I not for many years resisting him, and refusing him? So that, if he makes me wait for salvation, I must not complain." Then I thought, "Well, now, if I were to keep on praying, and I did not find Christ for twenty years, yet, if I found him at last, the blessing would be well worth having, and worth waiting for, so I will never leave off praying for it." And then I thought, "Why should I expect that I must be heard, the moment I choose to come to the mercy-seat, when I would not hear God's call when he so often spoke to me?" So I still persevered in prayer, yet with this thought,—What can I do else?—like a whip ever upon my back. I felt that this must be my resolve,—

> "I can but perish if I go;
> I am resolved to try;
> For if I stay away, I know
> I must for ever die."

I like that plan which I have known to be followed by some who have gone to their room, and shut the door, determined not to go out till they had found the Saviour. They have read the Word, especially such passages as these, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and they have gone down on their knees, and have said, "Lord, this is thy promise. Help me now to believe in Jesus, and give me salvation, for his sake, for I will not leave this place without thy blessing!" Such vehemence, such importunity, is sure to prevail. How dare any one of you continue to live unsaved?

How dare you, sir, again close your eyes in sleep while you are unreconciled to God? What if, instead of waking up in that bedroom of yours, you should lift up your eyes, and say, "Where am I? What is this dreadful place? Where are the things I once loved? Where are the things I lived for? Where am I? Where is Christ? Where is the gospel? Where are Sabbath days? Where are the warning words I used to despise? Where is the power to pray? Is all this gone for ever? And where am I? In dark, dark, dire despair; an enemy to thee, O God, and an enemy to thee for ever! Horror and dismay have taken hold upon me."

The very attempt to depict that awful scene makes me feel as though dread would stop my tongue. Oh, I pray you, go not there! There are some who deny the eternity of future punishment; but, for my part, I would not risk such suffering for an hour even if it should end then. What woe it would be to be only an hour in hell! Oh, how you would wish then that you had sought the Saviour, and had found him! But, alas! there is no such thing as an hour in hell; once lost, you are lost for ever! Therefore, seek the Lord now; cry, with Jeremiah, "O Lord our God, we will wait upon thee." You cannot brazen it out; you cannot escape from everlasting wrath unless you trust in Jesus, so let this be your cry,—

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want
More than all in thee I find!

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee!"

So, Christ of God, we cast ourselves into thine arms! Save us, save us, save us, for thy sweet mercy's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XVIII. 35—43; AND XIX. 1—10.

Chapter xviii. Verses 35—38. *And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

He did not need to be told twice who was passing by, nor did he need any exhortation to seek Christ's help. It was enough for him that Jesus of Nazareth was near him; so he would cry to him for the help he alone could give. Oh, that we were half as sensible! Oh, that the blindness did not get into men's hearts! If it were not so, every blind soul would at once begin to cry to God for mercy; there is not one poor sinner here, who knows that Jesus often passes this way, who would not begin at once to cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

39. *And they which went before rebuked him,*

"Be quiet," they cried.

39. *That he should hold his peace:*

"Do not interrupt the flow of those marvellous words, or break the thread of that matchless discourse."

39. *But he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

They could not quench the fire that burned within his breast; they did but increase its intensity by all their efforts to put it out. The blind man was so earnest to get his eyes opened that his voice could not be silenced. This was a proof of his common sense and true wisdom. It is remarkable how clearly the blind people mentioned in the Scriptures could see. Oh, that those who think they can see could really see as plainly as this blind man could, and would act as wisely as he did! "He cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." This was his only hope;—perhaps, his last opportunity; so he availed himself of it to the full.

40, 41. *And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

There was no waste of words. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said, and he knew what he wanted. It is a great thing, in prayer, to know what we really need,—a very important thing to be sensible enough not to multiply words, but to cry to the Lord with a definite object, as this blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42, 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

That was a blessed praise-meeting, brought about by the healing of that one man. Now that his eyes were opened, he showed that his mouth was not closed. He proved that he could pray well; now he proves that he can also praise well. He prayed when they tried to stop him, and now nobody shall stop him from praise; and he so praised the great Physician that, with the flaming firebrand of his gratitude he set all other hearts in a blaze: "All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

Chapter xix. Verse 1. *And Jesus entered—*

That is, he entered at one end of the town,—

1. *And passed through Jericho.*

And so came out at the other end of it.

2. *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

It was an important station for the collection of customs; there was a good deal of produce at Jericho upon which there was a tax, so Zacchæus had a good post: "he was rich."

3—7. *And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured,—*

Some of the very people, I suppose, who had just before given praise to God. So fickle are the judgments of men that we need not be elated when all of them speak well of us. It only needs that the wind should veer just half a point, and they will all speak ill of us. The cry of men, even when it is most clear and strong, is not to be depended on. They shout "Hosannah," to-day; but, before the week is out, they cry, "Crucify him; crucify him." So, here, "They murmured,"—

7. *Saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

I do not know where else he could have gone, for they were all sinners;

but they meant that this tax-gatherer was "a sinner" by public reputation, he was an excommunicated person, who was regarded by everybody as "a sinner" in a very special sense.

8. *And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;—*

"Henceforth, one half of my income shall go in almsgiving;"—

8. *And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

"I will not give to the poor or to God that which is not lawfully mine. I will not steal a sheep, and give the feet to the poor; but I will give back, four times over, anything that I may have taken wrongfully, and still the half of my future income shall go to the poor."

9, 10. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAVING THE LOST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 17th, 1879.

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10.

OUR Lord's mission upon earth was a very gracious one. It had a narrow side to it, for he came only as a minister—not as a Saviour, mark you, but as a minister—to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He was, as the apostle Paul reminds us, "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God;" and he did not traverse any other country but Palestine, in order to preach the gospel to the people, but he kept himself to the seed of Abraham.

Yet there was abundant room for one personal ministry within that realm alone. If a Christian worker were to say that he would confine his labours to London, he certainly need not think that he would have a restricted range; and our Saviour's personal preaching in Palestine gave him more work than any one man could accomplish. But, even in that restricted sense, it is remarkable that he should have said to the woman of Canaan, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The lost sheep were the peculiar desire of his heart;—not so much Israel, as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His eye was specially fixed upon them, his grace sought out the objects most needing it; his mercy hungered after human misery in order that he might relieve it; so that, always, there were uppermost in his mind thoughts of pity and love towards the sons of men.

At this present moment, under the gospel dispensation, there is no division between Israel and the Gentiles. I do not care whether I am an Israelite or not, after the flesh; because, in Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. That is all abolished, and all the fuss that some people make about whether we are descended from the Jews, is nonsense, and nothing better. If it is so, it does not signify in the least; for, now, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor

free; but Christ is all, and in all." The middle wall of partition has been taken down once for all; and, now, all over the world, this truth stands in reference not to this nation, or to that alone, but to the whole human race, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Still does his eye, with eagle keenness, spy out the lost. Still does that eye, with dovelike tenderness, weep for the lost. Still does the eternal Saviour live that he may seek and save that which was lost. If you were never lost, you have no part or lot in his work of salvation; but, if you are lost, and know it, this is the very link which unites you to the Saviour. He has come to seek and to save just such as you are, and I hope, in the observations I am about to make, that I shall be able to show that he came to save you.

I. I shall speak concerning OUR LORD'S MISSION. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Notice, first, *what a gracious mission it was!* It was a mission of pure mercy, and indescribable love. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to seek his own honour, but to seek and to save the lost; not to get anything for himself, but to give everything to those who are lost. His mission is one of undeserved goodness, on his part, towards those who have treated him ill, and who deserve very different treatment at his hands. There was no law, except his own love, to compel Christ to come to save sinners. They had no claim upon him. When he resolved to come, it was an act of matchless grace. If he had not chosen to come, he would still have been the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, enshrined in glory everlasting though every one of us had perished. His coming was infinite goodness, returning good for evil, coming down to our lost estate, and determining, by superabundant affection, to save us from it. Our Saviour is embodied grace, incarnate love; and his mission is grace itself. Let us never forget that he came to save the lost,—not to save the good and the excellent. Ah, my brethren! Christ's eye looks in the opposite direction to ours. We usually look for some goodness on the part of men before we help them; but he looks to their sin, and degradation, and necessity; he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He justifieth those who are not in themselves just; while we were dead in trespasses and sins, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Grace, pure grace, abounds in him, and is blessedly manifested in his mission of saving the lost.

Further, while that mission is a very gracious one, I call your attention to the fact that *it is also a great one.* Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost, and there are plenty of them; it is no small charge that Christ has taken up when he speaks of saving the lost. What a mass of our fellow-countrymen are lost! I mean, in the common use of the term "the lost classes," that are morally gone astray, and are, by universal consent, put down among the lost. Look at whole nations of mankind that are sunk up to their eyelids in infamous transgression, lost to every sense of shame and decency. Christ, however, has come to save just such as they are; and, truth to tell, the difference between us and them, by nature, is not more than skin deep. We are a little better washed on the outside than

they are, but the inside of the cup and platter of fallen humanity is pretty much alike in all men. We may have been better taught; we may have been more restrained than they have been; but a viper is a viper still wherever he may live, and man is, in every case, a lost man, a depraved and sinful creature. To my mind, it seems a wondrous charge for Christ to undertake,—to save "the *lost*," without any qualification added to the word,—just "the lost."

What a mission Christianity had when it first came, for instance, into Rome! When first Christianity came there, it was inconceivably vile. Its emperors were madmen; I think I cannot truthfully say less of such monsters as Nero, and Tiberius, and Caligula, whose power seemed all to be bent to supply themselves with the means for the indulgence of the most abandoned forms of vice. The city of Rome was full of statues, the larger part of which, thank God, have been utterly destroyed; and I often wish the rest had been, for many of them are polluting and depraving even to look upon. The city was full of idols as well as of art; and the principal images were not the more respectable ones, like Jupiter and Mercury, but Venus and Bacchus, and other abominations from the filthy crowd of Olympus. The rich indulged themselves in every luxury. Women, while their maids waited upon them, and dressed them, practised upon their female slaves cruelty of such a kind that one would think that everything feminine had gone out of them. Slaves were tortured and put to death, and nothing was ever said about such common crimes. In the amphitheatre, into which the multitudes crowded, scores, and even hundreds of gladiators died in a single day, slaying each other in mutual conflict to make a Roman holiday. The nation was full of corruption, bribery, filthiness. A few characters shone out brightly, the more renowned because they were so few; but the land, as a whole, was such that, if Vesuvius had belched forth a torrent of fire high enough to set all Italy in a blaze, and an earthquake had opened its mouth, and swallowed it all up, there would have been as much justification for its destruction as for that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old.

But Christianity came into Rome in the form of a poor fisherman, and a tent-maker, and others like them; and they began to say, "We must love each other; you who are rich must count it a privilege to help the poor. We must all fear and serve the one true God, for there is but one; and God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth. You are not to treat men with cruelty; you are not to have these sanguinary games; you are not to indulge these licentious propensities. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, has died to save us from sin, and all its consequences." It was a very still small voice that was heard in Rome at first; and if it had not been for the supernatural power of God, it would speedily have been silenced. But its influence soon began to spread; for some of the rich men in the city, and some of the soldiers on guard in Cæsar's palace, and many of the poor slaves embraced the new religion; and everywhere they were renowned for kindness, and gentleness, and purity, and love. Then wicked men said, "We will put this new religion down," and hor-

rible persecutions followed; but, notwithstanding all that the Christians suffered, Rome became leavened with the influence of Christianity. By-and-by, slavery passed away; cruelties were no longer indulged; the amphitheatre was abolished; many of the idol gods were broken in pieces; the one invisible God was worshipped; and the world rose up, like one that has been in an awful swoon, and dreamed dreadful things, and she looked into the glass, and saw her face as though she had been born again. Christ had come to seek and to save lost society, and he did it in a marvellous way, as he always can do it; and he will continue to do it; for this is the great errand of my Master, that, wherever men are sunken in sin and vice,—wherever they are immersed in crime, or satisfied with their self-righteousness,—he has come to save them from it.

Mark, also, that my Master's mission, while it is a gracious one, and a great one, *is a very complete one.* He comes to seek; that is, to find, the lost; and coming into contact with lost humanity, he does not leave it lost, for he saves those whom he seeks.

And *what a condescending way of saving he has,* for the text says, "*The Son of man* is come." He was no "Son of man" once; he was, and ever remains, the eternal Son of God; but he deigned to take upon him this poor nature of ours; he became a man like ourselves,—a condescension so marvellous that, though we hear of it now with little astonishment, yet, if we sat down to think it over, it would remain an unexplained mystery to bewilder us with its marvels of matchless grace. Yes, the Son of God became the Son of man. As such, he lived; as such, he bled away his life upon the cross that he might redeem us. He has come, as the Son of man, that he might lift us up to be the sons of God. And, blessed be his name, the deed is done; and, by his Spirit's power, its glorious results are still bringing untold blessings to all who trust him.

Just once more, *what a practical aim our Saviour had in coming here!* Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to propound a philosophy, he did not come to explode ancient errors, he did not come to keep abreast of the times, he did not come to do the pretty things that many ministers are trying to do nowadays, he did not come to be rhetorical, he did not come to be popular, he did not come that he might gain the esteem of the multitude; he came to seek and to save the lost. Would God that his Church would keep to the same kind of work! But his Church seems to me to act, in a great measure, as if she were in the world simply to show off her pretty self with all her fineries,—to play her grand music, and tickle the ears of people with a Sunday concert, and I know not what of floral show to increase the attraction of it. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and what are we, who call ourselves his disciples, doing? Many of us are doing a thousand other things than this one great thing which alone is worthy of the service of the man who calls himself a *Christian,* and who therefore ought to be one who is *like Christ.* He came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and sisters, try to get at this work as closely as ever you can. Whatever else you can or cannot do, do seek to be the means

of saving souls. Whatever you can do, that is fine and grand, and that will bring you into esteem among your fellow-men, do try to save poor lost sinners, even though they should be among the lowest of the low, and the poorest of the poor. Do try to do what you are called to do in your Master's name; for, by the power of his matchless gospel, you also can seek the lost, and bring them to him to save them.

Thus much about our Master's mission.

II. Now I want, in the second place, to give A MESSAGE TO THE LOST ONES FROM MY TEXT.

I do not know where you lost ones are; but here, somewhere, are some of you who know yourselves to be lost. I am not talking to these other people; but you and I will have a little conversation between ourselves.

And, first, I ask you to *think what an interest is excited about you.* You are lost, and it seems that earth, and heaven, too, are concerned about your being lost, for the Son of man, who is also the Son of God, blends heaven and earth in one in being concerned about you. God's Church is interested in your salvation; many Christians are praying for you, and I am trying to speak out the common love of Christians to you. Because you are lost, we long that you may be saved. Suppose there is a little child in the family,—not a very pretty child, not always quite clean, nothing very much to look at in anybody's eyes except her mother's. They are seven or eight in the family, and the parents have not much time to waste in admiration of any one of them when they have to earn bread for so many. But, just now, little Mary is the principal object of thought in the family. Everybody's heart is taken up with Mary. There is nobody in the house who is not thinking of Mary; and what is the reason? Why, Mary went out, this morning, to go on an errand; and it is now evening, and she has not come home; and they have been round to the police-station, but they cannot find her. Mary is *lost*, so there is more thought of her than about Jane, or Hannah, or John, or Thomas, though they are of older growth, and better children, it may be. But Mary, just now, is uppermost with everybody, because Mary is lost! It is so with regard to you, my dear friend. You are in the uppermost thought of Christ just now, and you are in our uppermost thought, too, because you are lost. I do not want you to feel at all elated at being the subject of this interest; because it is not so much you, you know, or anything about you except the one fact that you are lost, which makes us so much interested in you.

Presently there is such joy, such kissing and hugging, such delight, such singing, because Mary is found. Perhaps you step in, and look at Mary; she is just as commonplace a little bairn as ever sat on a mother's knee; but still, you see, she has been lost, and she has been found, and, therefore, they are rejoicing over her with great joy. All the prominence that Mary gets is not due to her goodness, but to the fact of the love that cannot bear that she should be lost. And it is so with you, my dear friend. We would move heaven and earth about you if we could; we would

suspend the angels' songs, and bid them lean upon their harps, and look on, while all heaven and earth, in the person of the Well-beloved, are seeking and saving that which is lost. So I bid you remember what interest is excited about you!

Next, notice *what power and what wisdom are engaged concerning you,*—you poor lost body over there! The Son of man is come to seek and to save you. It is not that the preacher is labouring to save the lost; but, do you see, the pearly gates are swinging back on their golden hinges, the King's palace gates are opening, and there is One passing through, whose coming to the earth astounds cherubim and seraphim. It is he who descends, disrobing himself as he comes down, hanging up his royal rings like new stars, doffing his azure mantle, and stretching it across the sky, for, as George Herbert quaintly says, he has new clothes a-making down below. He comes here, to this poor earth, and you see him as a babe at Bethlehem, and a boy at Nazareth. Being here, he stoops continually lower and lower till he reaches the deepest depths of all upon the cross of Calvary. And, all the while he goes about his daily task, hunting for such as you. And what he literally did when he was here, he is still doing by the Divine Spirit; he is still watching, still waiting, still seeking, still going round the earth, hunting after the lost. It ought to greatly encourage you who are lost when you remember that there is such an one as the Lord Jesus Christ who has come after you. A child, lost in the wood, sits down, and cries. The night is coming on, she is very weary, and her sad little heart has only one comfort. "Father will begin to hunt after me directly he comes home; when mother tells him that his little girl is lost, he will search for me all night long; father knows the forest tracks, and knows where I have been wont to stray. Father will find me before the morning, so I will lay me down and sleep." And, dear lost one, you may have even more confidence that the Saviour will search for you. Do not give up in despair because Jesus seems so long in coming to find you. He has a piercing eye to see you, and a swift foot to leap o'er mountains after you, and a ready hand to grasp you, and strong shoulders on which to bear his wandering sheep home to the fold above. There is hope for thee, lost one, for the Son of man has come, bringing all his Godhead with him; and, in the infinity of his power, and wisdom, and love, he is seeking to save just such sinners as thou art.

I want you, however, to notice another thing;—you lost one, I mean, for you and I are supposed to be talking together to-night. *Do you see what trouble you have caused?* The little child is troubled at being lost, but think what trouble there is at home on her account. Last Wednesday morning, there came into my study a brother-minister, and I saw at once that he was in terrible trouble. He had come to see me about something else, but I could not help saying to him, "You have some great sorrow on your heart, have you not?" He answered, "Yes, I have; I lost my wife a year and a half ago, and that was a great grief to me, but I have a trial now which seems to cut me to the heart almost more than that bereavement did." "What is that?" I asked; and he

replied, "Last Sabbath morning, when I went to preach, I thought my boy had come into the chapel with me; but, after the service, I could not find him. I went home, but he did not come in to dinner, and I could not get any tidings of him anywhere. I had to preach, in the evening, with a heavy heart; for still I could not find him, and I spent the greater part of the night with others searching everywhere for him. And now," he said, "it is Wednesday, and I have not found him, nor have I heard a word concerning him." Oh, you should have seen how sad he looked! "It is my eldest boy," he said, "and he is lost." Up to this present moment, I believe that he has not heard anything of him. He would compass the whole land to find him, I know; but he does not know where to look for him. The boy is lost; and, possibly, he does not know what trouble he is giving to his father and all his friends; if he did, he would very soon be home. Ah! and sinners do give great trouble because they are lost. You have heard what trouble sinners gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. That death of his upon the cross was part of the trouble that fell upon his great heart because we will sin,—because we will be lost,—because we will not turn unto him and live. What trouble many of you sinners give to your friends on earth, and what trouble you gave to the Lord Jesus Christ! It threw him into a bloody sweat even to think of you as lost, and to take your place, and bear the penalty of your guilt.

There is one other reflection, which will not, I hope, wipe out this one; that is, *what joy you would give if you were found!* Oh, what clapping of hands there would be, and what singing of songs of thanksgiving, in your home, if you have a pious mother or a godly father! Sometimes, members of this church come to speak with me; and I know, by their manner, that there is something very joyful that they have to tell me. They do not laugh, they seem very quiet about their joy; but there is a deep under-current of gladness. One said to me, lately, "God has been very gracious to me, for both my son and my daughter have just found the Saviour." You know that fathers and mothers, when they are right-hearted, are much more glad about such good news as this than they are when they say, "My son has gained a fortune," or, "My daughter has married into a rich family." Oh, no! to be able to say they are saved is the best thing that can possibly be said about them. I feel such gladness as I never can express when I think of my own dear sons, whom God has brought to the feet of Jesus, and called to preach the gospel which their father loves. O you poor sad sinners, you would be the cause of great joy on earth, if you came to Christ; and you would make Christ himself glad, too. That is the greatest wonder of all,—that he, who sits upon the throne of God in bliss ineffable, can have an increase to his joy if you are saved. Yet we know that it is so, for "there is joy"—not only among the angels,—but Christ said, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" that is to say, it is God himself who has the joy, and Christ who rejoices over one sinner that repenteth.

That is my special word with you, poor lost sinner. May God

bless it to you, and may you speedily be found by the seeking Saviour!

III. Now I come to the closing portion of my discourse, which is to be A WORD TO OURSELVES.

My dear brothers and sisters, the workers in this church, I want to speak to you, and to myself; and what I want to say is just this,—if Jesus Christ, the Son of man, has come to seek and to save that which was lost, *what honourable work is yours and mine when we try to be the means of saving souls!* The Grand Worthy Chief Master of the confraternity of soul-winners is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Those who belong to that blessed company have Jesus Christ as their Head. I always feel that it is a high honour to be a minister of the gospel when I recollect what the old Puritan said. He said that the Lord God had only one Son, and he made a Minister of him; what could he do better with him? So, to-day, there is no higher rank on earth than that of a winner of souls. Be you in whatever position in life you may, if you are seeking to bring eternal salvation to men, you have far higher employment than falls to the lot of the mightiest of earth's kings and princes.

Next, think *how thorough your efforts ought to be in this work.* You ought to go after souls, to *seek* them, as the Son of man came to seek them. If they will not come into the place where you usually speak, go and speak to them where they are. If you have not got the children you want to have in your class in the Sunday-school, go and seek to bring them in; and then, when you have sought them, and gathered them around you, do not be satisfied till they are saved. It is a great mercy to have the house of prayer filled with people listening to the gospel. I am always glad to see such a sight; but, oh! if you hearers are not saved, what is the good of your coming here? If my Master will not give me your souls for my hire, I can scarcely thank him for allowing me to preach to you, for I am doing you harm rather than good, being "the savour of death unto death," rather than "of life unto life," if you hear the Word, but are not saved by it. O dear unsaved souls, we can never be satisfied concerning you until you are truly converted to God! Dear Christian workers, do not rest until those who listen to the gospel message, believe it, and so find eternal salvation.

Notice, next, *how naturally some of you ought to take to the work of soul-winning.* When a child is lost, who should seek it? Why, its mother and father, of course; they are sure to do so. Well, do you seek the souls of your own children? Do you pray for them? Do you pray with them? Do you try, by your teaching, and by your example, to bring them to Christ? If you do not, shame on you that you bear the Christian name! I hope all of you who are Christian parents are seeking the salvation of your own children. The next person to go in search of a lost child, after its parents, I should think, is its brother. A lad hears that his dear little sister is lost. I see the hot tears in the boy's eyes as he says, "Mother, I will go anywhere, I will go everywhere, if I can but find her." Well, now, you who are brothers, you who are

related to one another,—and you are all brothers of the one great human family,—you all ought, for that very reason, to be concerned about finding these lost ones. But if there is one member of the family who is affected the most by the loss of the child, it is, probably, the older sister who was specially charged to take care of it; or if the big brother is responsible, because the child was entrusted to his charge, he will not be able to bear himself. He will cry, "Oh, that *I* should have lost her!—that *I* should be the cause of her wandering away!" He will not rest at night, I am sure, unless he has found her. Some of us are very specially put in charge of souls. You teachers are; you evangelists are; you ministers are; and I am, as I know full well. What if I should ever be the cause of the loss of any one of you? I would not have it so; God grant that it may never be, that any word of mine, spoken in a thoughtless manner, or anything that I might say too coldly, or with too much levity, should ever lead an immortal spirit to turn away from hope and from the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be a dreadful thing if that were to happen; and if it ever has, let us henceforth be among the first to seek to find those who have gone astray.

I will tell you, too, who would be sure to look after a lost child; and that is, a child who was himself once lost, and who has been found. It may have happened years ago, but the lad says to his mother, "I know what it is to be lost, for I was once lost in a wood. Let me go and find the little one, as somebody came and found me." You who know the smart of sin, the sorrow that sin brings, will be amongst the very first to try to find the lost ones. I am sure you will, so I scarcely need say a word to urge you to this holy service.

Then there are those who are acquainted with the ground where the lost ones are; they are sure to go to seek them. A child lost in our London streets will probably be found again, but a child lost in the backwoods of America may never be discovered until its bones are found. We, who know the dangers of the road,—that roaring lion, those pitfalls and traps,—we cannot but feel that we must be amongst the first to go to seek the lost.

> "Oh, come, let us go and find them!
> In the paths of death they roam;
> At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say,
> 'I have brought some lost one home.'"

And we may, with great hopefulness, go about the work of seeking the lost, *because there is One with us, in the seeking party, who is sure to find them.* "Come," we say to one another, "let us gather together, and let us go, and search the woods, to find the lost one;" but we know so little about the work, and we are so weak and feeble, that we soon become dispirited. But here comes the One who is going to lead the search-party! You know him; look at his pierced hands, and feet, and brow. Mark that ensign of the Son of man, the spear-gash in his side. Look at his dear face; was there ever, on any other countenance, such beauty of compassionate love? He comes forward, girt with his golden girdle, with his eyes brighter than flames of fire; and he says, "I will lead

the search. You take your orders from me; I will tell you where to go, and I will go with you; and, so, my lost ones shall all be found." Dear Master, we are only too glad to go on such an errand. Thou shalt not have to tell us twice; and if any of us are inclined to linger, we think we see thee lift thy pierced hand, and say, "Who will go for me? and whom shall I send?" and many of us, rising in our seats, would fain uplift our hand, and dedicate ourselves from this very moment to this blessed service, each one of us saying, "Here am I, Lord; send me." Go thus, brethren and sisters, in the Holy Spirit's might, and in your Saviour's name; and may he enable you to bring home, with rejoicing, many of the lost ones; and to him shall be all the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXI. 23—46.

Verse 23. *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?*

Jesus knew that these men came to him for no good purpose, and that they were only trying to trip him up in his speech. He was always willing to teach when men were willing to learn, but he did not care to cast his pearls before swine. Therefore, mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

24—27. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered his accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves.

28—32. *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*

Those poor fallen women and degraded tax-gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God; and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented, and they believed. Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did it. But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord, and saying, "We will go, and work in God's vineyard," when John came, and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept him. They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's

messenger was from heaven or of men, again rejected him, and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John, they had themselves confessed that it was so; and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned.

I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here; I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you, who hitherto have said, "I will not go," who will repent, and go and serve your God; and, on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here, who have always been saying, "I go, sir," who nevertheless have not gone, and perhaps never will go; but will remain to the last disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

33—41. *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people. From generation to generation, they scorned the prophets of God, persecuted them, and put them to death; and when our Lord himself appeared, though his glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast him out from among them, and put him to death. Yet, beloved friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages; we must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God's prophets is the sin of our common humanity; and the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest.

"But we were not there," say you. No; and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers; and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, else you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect, and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some, you have striven violently, for your own conscience has been touched, and you have had to do violence to conscience in order to reject their message. Last of all, the Son of God himself has come to you in the preaching of the gospel. You have heard of his death, and of his atoning sacrifice, but you have rejected them; and, in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Saviour. You still refuse to have him for your Saviour; you disown him as your King; you strive against his righteous sway.

You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to him, and you are saved. But if that be not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject his Son. Take care lest of you also that prophecy should become true, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

42. *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,—*

What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingers' ends, and to be the only qualified interpreters of them: "Did ye never read in the Scriptures,"—

42, 43. *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

And, at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of heaven. But he, that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the gospel away from one nation, and gives it to another; but if it is not accepted by the other one, and if he has not all the glory of it ascribed to him, he will take it away from that nation, too. He may deal thus with us; if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation, and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom, we may not expect that God will always continue his kingdom amongst us. He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

44. *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken:*

If you stumble over Christ, the chief Corner-stone of God's building, you will be broken in pieces. If you reject him, you shall suffer serious loss.

44. *But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

If you arouse the wrath of Christ, and the Rock of ages falls on you,—as a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveller, and crushes him past all recognition,—you will be ground to powder.

45, 46. *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*

Unhappy people, to reject him who alone could bless them, and yet to stand in fear of him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, and our Friend, and our Saviour for ever, by his abounding grace! Amen.

"ONLY A PRAYER-MEETING!"

Forty Addresses at Metropolitan Tabernacle and Other Prayer Meetings, by C. H. SPURGEON. (*Passmore and Alabaster.* 3*s.* 6*d.*)

"The literary executors of the late pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle have carried out an intention which he himself formed, but was unable to fulfil. The addresses delivered by him at his Monday evening prayer-meetings—purely extemporaneous—were among the most lively and powerful of his utterances, and are well worthy of permanent preservation. It is well to know what so mighty a soul-winner thought of prayer-meetings,—the esteem in which he held them, the emphasis he laid upon them as an essential part of the church's life and witness, and an essential source of power. Here we learn how he conducted his prayer-meetings, and what sort of addresses—brief, pungent, intensely spiritual,—he delivered at them. It has been good for us to read these simple, devout, soul-stirring words, and every Christian man who reads them will doubtless bear the same testimony. We cannot all possess Spurgeon's unique genius, but we may share his devout and earnest spirit."—*The Baptist Times and Freeman.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

VICTORIOUS FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 15TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 24th, 1879.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—1 John v. 4, 5.

WHAT is this "world" that we have to overcome? Did not God make the world, and did he not see "every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good"? Yes, he did; but, after sin entered this world, men came under its power, and, now, by "the world" is meant all mankind who remain under the power of sin, and are enemies to God. "The world" means the whole corrupt mass of human society out of which God has taken a people whom he has chosen for himself, whom he quickens by his Divine Spirit, and whose business it is to overcome the world. They will find that the world—the power of evil—will war against them, and they also must war against it, and the issue of the battle must not long be doubtful. There remains for us only one of two courses; either the world must overcome us, and we must yield to it; or, else, we must overcome the world, and cause it to submit to us.

The apostle helps us to understand what he means by "the world" by what he says in the third verse: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Now, anything which makes us think that God's will is grievous is of the spirit of the world, against which we have to fight. If, for instance, we are tempted to think that the restrictions of God's law—his commandments and precepts—are too stringent, it is the spirit of the world which tempts us so to think; for "his commandments are not grievous" to those who truly love him. It is only to the rebellious world that the restrictions of God appear to be too stringent, or that the commands of Christ become burdensome. If we are suffering pain or poverty, or whatever form of trial we may be called to endure, if we are tempted to say, "God is dealing harshly with us, he is unkind to us," that also is manifesting the spirit of the world against which we are to contend until we

conquer it. For God's will is always right; and if we really love him, we shall own that it is right; and though, for a while, we may have to fight against the spirit of rebellion, yet, if we are indeed God's children, we must get the mastery over that spirit of evil; and, so, the will of God, even when it involves pain, weakness, shame, or death itself, shall still be perfectly agreeable to us because it is the will of God. We have not completely conquered the spirit of the world until we can truthfully say that the commandments of God, so far from being grievous to us, are acceptable simply because they come from him.

Now I propose, as God shall help me, first, to speak of *the conquest itself;* then, of *the conquering nature:* "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and, thirdly, of *the conquering weapon:* "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

I. First, then, concerning THE CONQUEST ITSELF. What is it to overcome the world?

Certainly, it is not to go about the world blustering and bullying everybody until they all lie prostrate at our feet; because, if we could accomplish such a feat as that, the world would, in such a case, have overcome us, and we should not have conquered it. We should have displayed a spirit and temper betokening the pride of power,—the desire to rule over others,—and this love would have mastered us. Alexander the Great, when he was master of the whole world, was the greatest slave within it, for he was discontented even with his victories; the pride of conquest held him in captivity by its iron chain. No; he who aims at the highest greatness in this world may only be more greatly selfish than the rest of mankind, and what is that but to be really little? He is truly great who is the most unselfish, and he is the least of all who lives for himself alone.

Neither is it overcoming the world if you try to get out of it, and to live by yourself, so as never to be tempted to sin. I have seen a man on his knees by the hour together, reading some pious Latin book, living in a monastery where he never spoke;—he had evidently conquered his tongue, because he gave no answer to anybody who ever spoke to him. He was reckoned, by his brother-monks, to have overcome the world; but had he really done so? Ask any soldier whether a man, who slinks away in the day of battle, and hides among the baggage, and does not fight at all, is a conqueror. That would be a very easy way of winning a victory,—just to escape from the fight,—to be of no service in the battle between good and evil, but just to hide away in your own little snuggery over there, in the monastery, or the convent, or the hermitage; it might be an easy way of believing that you had conquered because you had ceased to fight, but that delusion would not make the victory yours. No, brethren; you and I have to roll up our shirt-sleeves, and go into the world, and work like other people; we have to mingle with our fellow-men, and, as the Lord God said to Adam, in the sweat of our face have we to eat our bread. It may be our occupation to have to add up those long columns of figures, or to measure up those bales of goods, or to talk to our

fellow-men on various matters; but, whatever our employment may be, we have to be in the world, and we have to conquer it; to be *in* the world, yet not *of* it,—as much separated from the rest of mankind as if we belonged to an alien race;—conquerors of it wherever we go, not by getting out of it, but by mingling with the men and women in it,—doing all that is lawful and right, and all that is expected that a man should do to his fellow-men; yet, all the while, being conquerors over the evil spirit of the world.

Now, having shown you what this conquest of the world is not, let us turn to the positive side of the question, and see what it is. The first thing that is necessary with many who are seeking to overcome the world is, *to cut themselves loose from the world's customs.* They were born into the world: one man has his own little world, and another man has another little world; but every man, sooner or later, finds himself in a world of sin. There are ungodly companions with whom he is linked,—evil associations to which he is bound. There are some men who, in their unconverted state, give themselves up entirely to the pleasures of the world, the amusements and frivolities of what is called "Society." Now, if such men ever expect to overcome the world, the very first thing they must do is to cut their old connections altogether, to sever all the bonds which unite them to those who lead them into sin.

Such a thing has often happened as for a man, who has been the best of company, and the choicest of good fellows among worldlings, to sit down in quietness for half an hour, and God the Holy Ghost has wrought so mightily upon his heart that he has said to himself, "What have I been doing but playing the fool to make other fools laugh? How am I spending my time? I must honestly say that I am doing no real good with it. What am I making of my manhood? Here it is,—well-nigh six feet of it, and it will soon lie in six feet of earth;—what am I doing that is really worth the doing? Am I not really wasting my time? This style of living will not do." Ah! the blessed Spirit has begun working in the man, and he has wept before his God as he has thought over his wasted life. Further, he has, by faith, looked to Jesus on the cross, and he has said, "Thou, blessed Saviour, hast redeemed me; so, henceforth, I will be thine. As I live by thee, I will live for thee, and for my fellow-men." After arriving, by God's grace, at that decision, he has become a different man from what he used to be. His old companions could not get him back to his former haunts, however much they might try to do so. Even if he should go there, they would not long want him with them, for he would not be any longer of their way of thinking or their way of acting, for he would be a changed man altogether.

There are many of you who would like to come to that decision, but you never appear willing actually to decide to serve the Lord; you are always going to do it, yet you never do it. You hesitating people are the most unhappy folk in the whole world, for you neither get comfort out of your present condition, nor out of that better condition after which you sometimes aspire, but which you have not the courage resolutely to seek after until you find it.

Some men have just enough conscience to make them miserable, but they have not enough force in it to make them determine that things shall be altered. Their religion is very much like the experience of certain boys who, professedly, go out to bathe in the early morning. They put their toes into the water, and shiver all over with the cold; but the brave swimmer takes a header, plunges right in, is soon in a fine glow, and comes out praising the delightful bath he has had. I would urge every man who is just now upon the point of deciding,—and I pray God the Holy Spirit, with his almighty energy, to back up my urging,—that he may now say,—

"'Tis done,—the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

I pray that he may henceforth be a changed man, that he may forsake his former evil ways, and live wholly unto God. That is the first part of overcoming the world,—breaking loose from its bonds, so that one can say, "I am not tied down by it any longer; by God's grace, I am a free man in Christ Jesus."

But that emancipation is merely a beginning. Overcoming the world further consists in *maintaining that freedom.* Oh, what a work is this! It is no child's play for a man to say, "No, I will never again be the slave that I used to be. By God's eternal grace, I have broken off this fetter and that, and never again shall those chains be fastened upon me. Great God, by thine almighty love, thou hast loosed my bonds; I am thy free man; I am free indeed, and I will fight for my freedom, and under no possible circumstances will I go back again to my old slavery." Ay, but that fight is the difficulty; and I shall have to show you that nobody can be victorious in that fight unless he is one of a peculiar race,—those who are born of God, born from above. This is a stern battle;—when the world surrounds us everywhere,—when pleasure tempts us,—when gain tries to corrupt us,—when poverty assails us,—when evil company seeks to sway us,—it is hard for us to come right straight out of all our former associations, and then to keep out,—remaining conquerors over the world throughout the whole of the rest of our life; and being conquerors even in death, having vanquished the world even on our dying bed.

Part of the overcoming of the world consists in our being *raised above circumstances.* Remember how the apostle Paul had conquered the world. He sat in prison shivering with the cold; but he said, "I know how to be abased." He went, by-and-by, into the houses of some of his friends, where they gave him all that he could desire; and he said, "I know how to abound." It is not an easy thing to be such a master of the world that the utmost poverty cannot make you miserable; yet God can give you grace to say, "I can be poor, but I will be upright. I can lose every stick that I have, but I will stand fast by Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour; and while I have him, I cannot be cast down."

I say that the fight against poverty is a very stern one; but the battle against the seductions of wealth is a far sterner one. Perhaps some of you think that you would like to fight that battle;

I daresay you would, but you do not know what you are wishing. I see many men who are very gracious under all sorts of want; and I see many other men who, in proportion as they grow rich in worldly things, grow poor as to spiritual things. Very often, just in proportion as men get high in earthly position, in that proportion they cease to do anything that is of any particular service to anybody. I do not know what would become of any of us if we were made peers of the realm. It is, I have no doubt, a great trial to anybody to be so exalted; but there is scarcely a person here who could wear a coronet, and yet faithfully serve the Lord; and probably there is not a man or a woman among us who could endure the trial of being made a king or a queen. It needs more than a world of grace to overcome the world when the world makes much of you. When God does give us piety in high places, as, blessed be his holy name, he sometimes does, we ought to be most grateful for it, for it is a plant that does not grow well in such a situation as that. The old couplet is still true,—

> "Gold and the gospel seldom do agree,
> Religion always sides with poverty."

It has been so from the first, and I suppose it will be so to the last. But the true conquest of the world is, to be indifferent about all such things,—to be grateful for abounding mercies, and to be grateful even for straitened circumstances. They used to say, "Philosophers can be merry without music," and, certainly, Christians can be happy without having their cup perpetually full. "I have learned," said the apostle Paul, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Happy are all they who have learned the same lesson, for this is overcoming the world.

Once more, dear friends, to overcome the world is, *to be above its threats, and above its bribes.* You working-men, who are Christians, often have a hard time of it; but when your work-mates mock and jeer at you, and call you ill names, never mind them. Overcome the world by patiently enduring all the persecution that falls to your lot. Do not get angry; and do not become downhearted. Jests break no bones; and if you had any bone broken for Christ's sake, it would be the most honoured one in your whole body. Still, you need not wish to have the friendship of this world, and you must not expect to have it, for the world loves not God's people. Look how it served them in ages gone by; hanging was thought to be too good for them, so it roasted them alive. The world would have exterminated the saints if it could have done so; and, to-day, what does the world say of Christians? "Oh! they are either fools or fanatics, or else they are a set of canting hypocrites." If a man preaches the gospel, and many are drawn to hear him, cavillers cry, "Oh! he is a mountebank." If any Christian man is very precise and particular, they say, "Ugh! he is one of the snivelling Puritans." They never know anything bad enough to say of genuine Christians. They do not like us; it were a pity that they should, for they did not like our Master, and they do not like our Father. If we will consent to hide our doctrines, or to daub

them over with the philosophical luminous paint of the present period, they will put up with us; but if we bring out pure gospel truth, straightway they will be down upon us. Yet there are some of God's people that the world does love, when they do the world a good turn. If their love to man leads them to a high philanthropy, and if the world can get anything out of them, it does not mind loving them. It has a cupboard love even to saints; and if there is any profit to be made out of them, the world will love them, though not their saintship. They like Mr. So-and-So as a politician; but when it comes to his religion, they say, "That is his weak point." They do not care to interfere with that. They admire another man because of his care for the poor,—the widow and the fatherless; but they hate the doctrine of the cross which he delights to preach, and which is to him the very joy of his heart.

On the other hand, when the world cannot frighten us by frowns, it often tries to woo us by smiles. "Oh!" it cries to us, "you really are righteous overmuch, you are too good. You need not be so precise; come just a little way with us, yield only an inch, that is all we ask." No, brethren, yield no inches for all the smiles on this Jezebel's painted face; but stand out just as boldly against her blandishments as against her thunderbolts. Care nothing for her opinion or her action either way; for, if you do, you will not have overcome the world. God help us, by his gracious Spirit, to be conquerors in that sense!

To overcome the world, further, means *to be above the influence of the world's example.* As I said before, we have, each one of us, our own little world; and we all are, to a certain degree, subject to the influences of those who surround us. The young man, in business, who begins as a Christian, is too often influenced by the pernicious maxims and customs of the trade with which he is connected. Men mingle in society, and each one to some extent affects the others. How often is a pious child grievously affected by an ungodly parent! How frequently a gracious servant is ill-affected by an ungodly master or mistress! But if you really overcome the world, you will live above its influence. You will be like one, who is obliged to go where the air is foul, and disease is rife, but who has such a healthy constitution that he does not catch the disease, and is not polluted by the impurity. There is no seed-plot within him for the disease to grow upon. Blessed is that man who is himself an example to his fellows,—who does not so much come under the influence of others as cast his own influence over others. God make all of you, beloved, such true leaders of mankind in the right direction because you have yourselves overcome the world!

If you want to see the portrait of a man who overcame the world, look at Abraham. He was at home with his father in Haran, and God said to him, "Come forth;" and away he went, with Sarah, and Lot, and their flocks and herds. The well-watered plain of Jordan lay before him, and he might have settled in it, as Lot did; but it did not tempt him, he dwelt alone, with his flocks and his herds, where God had bidden him go. The king of Sodom, and Abraham's nephew, Lot, were carried away captive; and, for the

sake of Lot, Abraham went with a band of men, smote the allied kings, and delivered the prisoners. The king of Sodom said to him, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." Now, according to the rules of war, the spoil was all Abraham's; but, oh, how grandly did he behave! He was not going to be conquered by the world, so he said to the king of Sodom, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich;"—which was as much as saying, "I have a right to it if I like to take it, but I waive my rights. I act from higher motives than the ordinary rules of men can supply; the Lord Jehovah is my Helper and Provider, and I live upon what he gives me. He can make me rich without the help of the king of Sodom, so take your goods, and go." See also how nobly he overcame the world on that memorable day when God said, "I will now see whether Abraham really does love me best of all. He has one boy,—the child of his old age,—and I will tell him to offer him up in sacrifice." And grandly did the patriarch, in that fiery trial, overcome the world; for Isaac was, practically, all the world to him on that day when he unsheathed the knife, and proved that his love to God was superior to everything else; and this is the kind of conquest to which you, beloved, are also called. May God grant that you may be well equipped for it, and be truly victorious in it!

II. Now, secondly, I think you will be prepared, after my giving this explanation of what it is to overcome the world, to hear about THE CONQUERING NATURE: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

Do you all know what it is to be born of God? I do not think I can tell you, in so many words, exactly what it is, though I know for myself. It is not simply to be improved and reformed. It is a grand thing when a man, who has been degraded, lives in a better fashion; but a cobbler might take an old shoe, and mend it, yet that would not make it a new one. Being born of God is also more than being made anew. It includes that, but that is not all that it includes. For God, who makes all things, can new-make them when he pleases; yet that does not make them to be born of him. We all know what it is for one person to be born of another; you were all born of your father, and of your mother, and so you became partakers of your parents' nature. In like manner, only in a far higher sense, regeneration is more than creation, for there is in it a kinship with God. So, being born again makes us something more than God's creatures; we are God's children. You know that blessed truth of adoption, by which God takes men, and adopts them into his family; but regeneration is a great deal more than adoption. A man may have an adopted child, but yet it is really no child of his; there is nothing of himself in it, and he cannot put his nature into it. But we are not only God's adopted children; if we are indeed born from above, we are God's newborn children. The divine nature is actually put into us when we are born of God; is not that a wonderful thing? And that miracle of mercy must be wrought in all of us who are ever to overcome the world.

For notice this, *no nature but the divine nature will ever try to overcome the world.* By nature, we are of the world; and that which is of the world will not fight against the world, it will not even think of doing so. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and flesh will not fight against flesh. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil;" but the devil will not fight against the world, or try to overcome it, for his course is the course of this world, he is the prince of it. But where the divine nature comes, it comes to fight against the world. The holy nature of God never enters into a man but what that man cries, "Now will I be wholly free from sin; now will I shake off every fetter of it." "Now," saith he, under the power of this divine inner life, "I do scorn the thought that I, who am born of God, should be a slave to sin,—that I, who bear within me something of the Deity,—I, who am a twice-born man, begotten again by God the everlasting Father, of whom I have become a child,—I loathe the very idea of yielding to sin." That is the kind of man to overcome the world because of the divine nature within him.

For, see, the regenerated man is sure to overcome the world, when he goes to fight against it, because, first, *he has the Spirit of the Father in him.* Now, God the Father is the world's Creator; so the world can never be a match for its Creator. He made it, and he can destroy it whenever he pleases to do so. It is not possible that sin should overcome God, for, as the apostle James tells us, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." He is by nature perfectly holy; and when this divine nature is put into a man, it is still holy, and it cannot sin, because it is born of God.

This new nature is also *akin to the nature of Christ;* and you know how the second Person of the blessed Trinity—the Christ of God,—dwelt here among men, and the world could never overcome him. Men could kill him, and they did; but they could not make him sin. They could drive him from place to place; but they could not make him angry, they could not provoke him to speak any word that he might afterwards regret. They could never get anything from him which was worthy of reproach or of rebuke. They called all the witnesses they could to testify against him; but even the false witnesses could not agree together, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And even on the cross of Calvary, when they hung him up to die, his dying pangs could extort from him nothing but a prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And thus he conquered the world, for the human nature in him, blended with the divine, could not be conquered by the world, it was not possible.

Further, *we become akin to the Divine Spirit* by being born of God, and the Holy Spirit cannot be conquered by the world. It is he that doth convince the world of sin. It is he that shall yet win this world for Christ. He is omnipotent; so, when the Spirit of God dwelleth within us, as he does when we receive the divine nature, it is not possible that he should be conquered, or that we should be conquered by the world.

Now, men and brethren, hearken to these words. Do you not see

that you must overcome the world, or else you will perish? But you cannot overcome the world as you are. You must, therefore, be born again. Your only hope lies in your being born of God; and this, if it is ever to take place, must be God's work. It is God alone who can do it; so you are like ships on their beam-ends, you cannot "right" yourselves. Cry, therefore, with your whole heart unto God, and ask him to work this miracle in you." Salvation is of the Lord." He can save you. He can take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. He can breathe upon the dry bones, and make them live. Ay, he, the mysterious Father of our spirits, can create in us a new spirit that shall be begotten of himself, and be like unto himself; and this we must have, or we can never overcome the world.

III. Now, thirdly, and lastly, I have to speak of THE CONQUERING WEAPON WHICH IS USED BY THIS NEW NATURE: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

It never entered into my head that the most of professing Christians would ever overcome the world. I do not think they ever will, for the world has, to a large extent, overcome them. You may hear some of them asking, "How far may we go in worldly amusements?" You really want to go, do you not? Then go; for it does not matter much where such people as you are do go. "Oh, but we should like to go as far into the world as we might!" Would you? Then, my Lord's message to you is, "Ye must be born again." It is quite evident that you have not the nature of God in you, for the divine nature in the soul makes it start back, and say, "How far can I get away from anything that looks like wrong? I hate the very appearance of evil." The Christian man does not deny himself this or that, merely because he feels under an obligation to do so, or because he dreads the lash of God's whip. No; if he could indulge his new nature to the full, he would continually swim in the sea of perfection. If he could be what he wishes to be, he would never think a wrong thought, much less speak an evil word. Now, the divine nature that is in him fights against sin, it cannot help doing so; and it clings to that which is good, and craves after that which is right. Just as the ox longs to drink water, and stands in a pool of it on a hot day, and drinks and drinks again, so does the Christian seek to drink in the life and purity of God;—not because he is told to do so, or because some outside force operates upon him; but because the new nature is within him, and he longs, therefore, to indulge it to the full; and that new nature, being the nature of God, longeth after that which is pure, and lovely, and of good report.

The instrument with which this new nature fights against the world is faith; and faith conquers, first, *by regarding the unseen reward which awaits us.* The world comes, and offers pleasure as the reward of sin; but faith says, "There are greater pleasures to be had by abstaining from sin." The world says, "Take this gain to-day;" but faith says, "No, I will put what I have out at interest; there is something infinitely better to be had hereafter." In its beginning, faith generally works in that way; it despises all the

treasures of Egypt, and values far more the eternal rewards that Christ has laid up for it in heaven. But do you not see that there is a measure of selfishness there in both cases? The sinner sins in order to be happy, as he thinks; and the newborn man abstains from sin in order to be happy. Well, that is a good thing to do, though the motive be not the most commendable; and there is a measure of faith about it, for faith is looking for the future rewards, and believes in the heaven which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But as faith grows, it attains to something better than that; for *it recognizes the unseen Presence which is with us.* The world says, "Come with us, and go our way. We will pat you on the back; and say that you are a good fellow; and you will have a fine time if you come with us." But faith says, "I do not trouble about how I appear to your eye, for there is another eye which I can see, but which you cannot see, for God is looking at me, and I am most of all concerned to be right in his sight." Faith realizes that the newborn nature is in the divine presence, and thus makes God's presence to be just as real, and just as vivid as the presence of men; and that presence of God altogether outweighs the presence of men, and the believing soul says to the world, "To please you, I dare not do that which is wrong in the sight of God; for who are you, compared with the Most High God? I will not do wrong in order to escape your frown; for, by so doing, I should receive the frown of God, and I must maintain my integrity before him."

That, you see, is a higher position than the one I first mentioned; for faith not only regards the unseen reward which awaits the believer, but faith recognizes the unseen presence of God, and is moved by an all-constraining desire to please him.

That was a very striking incident in the life of our dear brother Oncken, of Germany, when the burgomaster of Hamburg said to him, "I hear, sir, that you have been baptizing at night." "I have, sir," he replied, "because the law will not permit me to do it by day." "How dare you immerse these persons?" asked the burgomaster. "I dare to do it," answered Mr. Oncken, "because it is the law of God." "And you have done it in defiance of the law of the land! Now, sir, do you see that little finger of mine?" "Yes," replied Mr. Oncken, "I see it." "Well, sir, as long as that little finger lives, I will keep you down, for I am determined to put an end to this movement." "But, Mr. Burgomaster," said Mr. Oncken, "not only can I see your little finger, but I can also see a great arm, which you do not see. That is the arm of the eternal God; and as long as that arm can move, you will not be able to put me down, for I am only doing the will of Jehovah." Years after that stormy scene, I went to preach in Hamburg in connection with the opening of my brother Oncken's chapel; and among the notable gentlemen who helped to honour that occasion by their presence was that very burgomaster. He still had his little finger, but he was not there to put Mr. Oncken down. He came to contribute to Mr. Oncken's work, and to show that the great arm of God had beaten the little finger of the burgomaster. That kind of experience has been many

times repeated in the world. The men of the world resolve to put us down, but it cannot be done. If we were simply of men, we might be put down; but we are of God, and the divine nature in us must conquer in the long run.

When faith rises still further, it feels that the soul so loves God, and so wishes to delight in him, and becomes so closely united to God, that *it takes pleasure in all that in which God takes pleasure.* It is true faith that believes that God takes pleasure in the humble actions of poor creatures such as we are; but our faith has that confidence. It believes God to be a kind and tender Father, delighting in what his children do; and, therefore, faith says, "I cannot grieve him; so, begone from me, sinful world! Away with your gold, and your silver, and your smiles, and your frowns; I dare not be influenced by any of these things, and so grieve my God." And, daily, as faith grows stronger and stronger, it tramples the world more and more under its feet, and altogether abhors it.

To the genuine Christian, Christ is life's one aim. He sets that mark before him, and shoots at it. I once saw a colonel shooting at a target. There were two targets near each other, and he made a centre at one of them. The attendant called out, "Which target was that gentleman shooting at?" "The one on the left," was the answer. "I thought so," said the man, "for he hit the one on the right." There are some people who are always shooting at the world, and it seems to be their great aim to hit it; but the Christian man is ever aiming at Christ; and if he has not made the centre yet, he will shoot again and again until he does, for his great desire is that he may live for Christ alone, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, "which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

So, I hope you see that, if faith be the conquering weapon, and we intend to be conquerors, we must become believers in the invisible God; and in order to exercise faith in the invisible God in Christ Jesus, we must be born again; for, until that new nature comes into us, we never do believe in Christ. We may believe a great deal in ourselves, we may believe in worldly society, in its threats, or in its bribes; but we do not believe in Christ. But how blessed is that man who, at the last, will be able to say, "I have faithfully served my God. I have turned neither to the right hand nor to the left. I have not considered myself; I have courted no man's praise, I have not sought pelf or gain. What I had to spare, I gave to God's cause and to the poor. What I could gather, I distributed according to the necessities of my fellow-men. I have lived for God, and for Christ, and for the truth; but I have not lived for myself." The man who can truthfully say that is a saved man. Whether you know it or not, my friend, that is salvation,—to be saved from sin and from self; and there is no getting salvation from the grovelling meannesses of selfishness except by being born again; for self clings to every man until he is born again, and it is not always gone even then. Satan spoke the truth when he said to the Lord, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for

his life." He will not be ready to part with life itself until he gets a higher life, and a better one, imparted to him by the Spirit of God.

Again I say that this truth throws us on our beam-ends. If we are to be saved, we must look to God; we must seek salvation at his hands, we must ask him for faith; and what a mercy it is that he waits to give it! You be nothing, and God will be everything to you. Get to the end of yourself, and that will be a proof that God has already begun with you. Cease to believe in your own merits, or your own virtues; put away all trust in yourself; and come and trust in God as he is revealed in his Son Jesus Christ; and you have received that salvation which will keep on progressing until all sin shall be driven out of you, and you shall dwell for ever where Jesus is,—as unselfish as Jesus is,—as pure, as blessed, as glorious as he is. God grant this to us all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXTRACTS FROM "NOTES" IN "THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL" FOR DECEMBER:—

OUR PROGRAMME FOR 1902.—First and foremost, unpublished manuscripts and reports of C. H. SPURGEON'S early Sermons and Addresses will still occupy the most prominent position in "his own Magazine." Pastor T. W. Medhurst has promised further valuable help in this direction. Next, will (D.V.) follow MRS. C. H. SPURGEON'S "Personal Notes on a Text," or anything else that the Lord may enable her to write. We did not dare, last December, to hold out the hope of having anything from her pen for publication in the Magazine; yet our regular readers will gratefully remember that, since last May, her "Personal Notes" have appeared every month, and several of her most recent contributions are included in her new book, "*A Basket of Summer Fruit.*" This should be a subject of special thanksgiving, as well as of continued supplication on the dear suffering writer's behalf.

Pastor Thomas Spurgeon will continue "The Pastor's Page" as frequently as his many duties will permit. Pastor Hugh D. Brown, M.A., has sufficient material for several more articles on "God's Witness to His Own Word." We receive increasing testimony to the value of our beloved brother's arguments for the truth of Verbal Inspiration, and many readers are hoping to purchase the volume in which the papers will be reprinted. Pastor H. T. Spufford—who has at last emerged from the "H. T. S." chrysalis-state,—will (D.V.) in 1902 furnish us with a new series of Nature Sketches entitled "My Lady's Garden," which we expect will fully maintain the reputation he has long won in that special department of literature.

"Our Own Men and their Work" will still be described monthly; Dr. Churcher, Mr. Elder, and others of our brethren will contribute articles of interest. Pastor C. W. Townsend has further "Scenes of Life and Labour in Canada" to portray; Pastor J. E. Walton will complete his papers on "Bush Life in Tasmania" as soon as the pressure of his other work will permit; the progress of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and its Institutions will, each month, be noted in our pages; and everything that is possible will be done to make the Magazine worthy of *him* whose name still appears on its cover, and of his Master and ours. One encouraging sign of the appreciation of the *Sword and Trowel* "Notices of Books" is the increasing number of valuable volumes sent for review; in fact, more come than can possibly be mentioned in the space at our disposal.

LONDON: PASSMORE AND ALABASTER, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS; and of all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"RETURN UNTO THY REST."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 22ND, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 7th, 1879.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee."—Psalm cxvi. 7.

YOU, who have not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, have no rest to which you can return, for you have never found any. May God grant to you the grace to come unto Christ, that you may find rest unto your souls! But we, who believe in him, do enter into rest. We are sometimes described as journeying through the wilderness towards Canaan, and the type is quite allowable; but, still, it must not be pressed too far; for, in another sense, we have already entered into our rest. We have entered the Canaan which our Joshua has given unto us; Moses, by the law, could not lead us into this promised land; but Jesus has brought us into it, and we now have our portion and our inheritance in the covenant blessings which God has provided for his people in Christ Jesus his Son. God's people, when they are as they ought to be, are in a state of rest even now. I do not mean that they will have rest so far as this world is concerned, for this earth is not our rest, it is polluted; but I do mean that, as the apostle Paul writes to the Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." I do mean that, as he also says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that peace includes "rest, sweet rest,"—especially that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which, the apostle declares, "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

If I am, at this time, addressing any who have, for a while, lost the enjoyment of this blessed rest, my message to them is, "Return unto thy rest." I hope that they will be able to take the psalmist's words to themselves, and to say with him, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

I. The first thing for us to remember is, that THE BELIEVER HAS HIS REST. The psalmist says, "Return unto *thy* rest, O my soul."

There is a position, or an experience, in which the believer's heart is perfectly at rest. While trying to think how I should describe it, nothing seemed to strike me as a more full and accurate description of the believer's rest than the apostolic benediction with which we are accustomed to dismiss our assemblies. He has true rest of heart who abides in the spirit of these words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

The first rest of the heart comes to us *through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* We generally speak of him as the second Person of the blessed Trinity; but, in the benediction, he is put first, because, to our experience, he is first. No man comes unto God the Father except by God the Son; so, to us, Christ is first, because that is the way his grace works in us. And, beloved, when you know how to come to Christ for grace;—nay, when you have come to him, and have received from him the grace to cover all your sin;—the grace to justify you in the sight of God;—the grace of adoption, by which you become a son of God in him who is the Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son;—when you have received the grace of union with Christ, so that you know yourselves to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;—when you know that all his grace is yours, and that he himself is yours, then it is that you get rest unto your souls. Sin cannot any longer disturb you, for it is drowned in the Red Sea of his atoning sacrifice. Your necessities cannot distress you, for they are all supplied by God "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Nothing need perplex, or afflict, or worry you any more. All the troubles of thought are ended as you believe what your Lord tells you. All the cravings of your heart are satisfied as you take him to be the Beloved of your soul. All the struggles of your conscience are ended as Christ brings to you peace and rest for ever concerning all your sin. In fact, as soon as you come to him, he gives you, through his abundant grace, rest about everything. This, then, is the first rest of the believer, which comes to him through the grace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

There is a further rest for us who believe, and a very sweet one; it is, *in the love of God.* It comes to us when we hear such a gentle whisper as this, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" or this, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life;" or this, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Oh, what blessed rest springs out of electing love, and adopting love! What sweet rest we obtain from the assurance that God the Father and God the Son both love us, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,

he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Thus is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

This glorious fact gives us rest with regard to our position here. We cannot be troubled by affliction, because it is sent to us in love. We cannot be worried about the future, for all its concerns are in the hands of the God of love. We no longer harbour doubt and mistrust, for we know that "God is love." O dear friends, when you once come really to know the love of God, it will give you wondrous rest! You will feel that he never smote a child of his except in love, that he never even frowned at one of his children except in love, and that he never was angry with one of his children except in love; and love, perhaps, never rises to a greater climax of affection than when it is forced to show its anger, and so uses the rod more to its own pain than to the suffering of those who feel it. Beloved, I trust that each one of you, who believes in Jesus, knows what that rest of heart is which enables you to say, "My God, my Father, thou canst do nought to me but what infinite love dictates, for I know that thou lovest me even as thou lovest thy firstborn and only-begotten Son."

The third rest of the believer is *in the communion of the Holy Ghost.* O beloved, this is the truest rest of the soul,—so far as your actual experience is concerned,—when the Holy Spirit comes, and takes complete possession of you, so that your will does not any longer struggle against the will of God, but sweetly yields to its control; your desires do not wander, but stay at home in full content; and you give yourself up entirely to the divine indwelling, so that Christ dwelleth in you, and you abide in him, by the power of his gracious Spirit. Then that same blessed Spirit brings to your mind the deep things of God, which are full of rich comfort for the soul, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of the covenant of grace, which abound in all the blessings that you can possibly want between here and heaven; for it is the Holy Spirit's special office to be the Comforter of Christ's people, and he makes the soul either to sit still at the feet of Jesus, to hearken to his gracious words, or else to run with cheerful yet restful alacrity on his errands, for there is such a thing as rest in running in his holy service.

Now, dear friend, if you have these three things,—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,—I am sure I need not stay to prove to you that, in your experience, you have realized what it is to enjoy rest for your soul. Do you all know what it is thus to rest in the Lord? I thank God that I do; I feel, specially at certain times, that I could not ask the Lord for anything more than he has given me; I could not wish anything altered, I could not desire to be in any other state;—nay, I do not even wish to be in heaven at such times as those to which I am referring. When I sit down beneath his shadow with great delight, and his banner over me is love, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste, it is a little nether heaven,—the

vestibule of the palace of the great King. Many of you must know what this rest is, I feel sure that you do.

II. This fact makes it rather sad work to turn to the second division of my subject, which is that, SOMETIMES, THE BELIEVER LEAVES THAT REST. He should not do so; it is most grievous that he does; but, alas! he does, as many of us are only too well aware by painful personal experience.

Sometimes, he leaves it *through affliction*, and especially if that affliction comes from man. The psalmist tells us that, in his haste, he said, "All men are liars." Perhaps he said some other naughty things, for which he was sorry afterwards; it is not always easy to be calm and prudent when you are provoked, and to be quite restful when everybody speaks ill of you, or tries to lay traps to catch you. But the child of God should try so to master himself that all the dogs that bark can no more disturb him than the baying of a hound would turn the moon out of her nightly course. Happy and blessed is that man whose heart is fixed, so that he can sing and give praise even though his adversary is all the while speaking bitterly against him. Yet the flesh is very frail, and aches and pains of body, as well as cruel slanders against the character, will sometimes turn the Christian aside from his restful state. He is not quiet and calm; he is in a hurry, the leisure of his heart is broken, and he is in great confusion. God save us from getting into such a sorrowful condition as that! For, if we had more confidence in our God, we should have less confusion in our own experience. We should be much more restful if we did but do our God the justice of trusting him at all times, for he can never fail us.

I have known some Christians to be driven from their restful state *through a want of submission to the divine will.* O dear friends, when you have been in sharp trials, when things have gone awry with you, and, especially, if some beloved object of your heart's affection is taken from you, then you have had a quarrel with your God! It is a very sad thing that we should ever differ from infinite love, or think that we know better than eternal wisdom, or begin to suspect the grace of the Most High. It is sorrowful that this should ever be the case with any of us; and we cannot, without many tears, confess that we have sometimes had a dispute with God about what he has been doing with us. And then, of course, we could not rest; for, in addition to our other sorrows, our wise and loving Father chastised us for our naughtiness. He would not spare us for all our crying, but he went on with his own designs concerning us even while we were so wilful and rebellious. Perhaps he even chastened us the more because of that rebellion. We may be sure that we shall never truly rest in the Lord while we have a stubborn will; until every desire learns to lay its head in Christ's bosom, and is fully satisfied with him, we shall never be at perfect peace. There is, for each one of us, a modified agony and bloody sweat until, like our Lord, we can truthfully say to our Heavenly Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." That want of submission to God lies at the root of half our

unrest. We must submit to him; it would be well for us if we did so at once.

Some Christians lose their rest *through want of contentment.* They are very happy in their present condition, for God has greatly blessed them; but their eye catches sight of a Christian who is better off than they are; and, straightway, they want to have as much as he has. They are not quite so well dressed as that brother is, and they wish that they were; their wife and family do not look, as the world says, quite so "respectable" as his; and, sometimes, in their folly, they will throw themselves out of a happy position in life, where they have the privileges of the means of grace, and go into a state of spiritual starvation just for the sake of being a little better off in temporal things, which is both foolish and wrong. Now, until we are perfectly content with what the Lord appoints for us, we shall not have rest unto our souls. Until we can honestly say,—

> **"To thy will I leave the rest,**
> **Grant me but this one request,**
> **Both in life and death to prove**
> **Tokens of thy special love;"—**

we shall never know what it is to enjoy full rest of heart.

I fear that there are many Christians who lose their rest in another way, namely, *through the world's joys.* Have you ever been, with a party of friends, where there has been a great deal of mirth and very little grace? If so, have you not felt, when you got home, that you could not pray as you were wont to do? Sometimes, you have been taking your recreation properly enough, but you have not carried Christ with you as you should have done; and you have found, after a while, that your rest has gone. Laughter and merriment may do you untold harm unless they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; if they are so sanctified, they may not cause us to leave our rest.

Frequently, too, Christian people lose their rest *through allowing some conscious sin;* for Christ and you will not long keep company with one another if you permit anything in your heart, or speech, or shop, or home, that is not according to his mind. His communion is with "the pure in heart: for they shall see God." But if sin be knowingly harboured, communion with Christ will not be enjoyed. The old Puritan was right when he said, "Sinning will make thee leave off communing, or else communing will make thee leave off sinning;" for the indulgence of any known sin is not compatible with a close walk with God. If, beloved, you and I get at a distance from God; if we follow Christ afar off, as Peter did; if we grow cold in heart, if we are neglectful of prayer, if the Word of God is not the subject of our constant study, if we get worldly and carnal, like so many of our fellow-Christians are, we shall soon find that the rest of our soul is gone.

It is a great mercy if you know when it is gone. It is a terrible thing to lose the joy of the Lord, and the rest of your spirit, and yet hardly to be aware that it is so with you. There is a very simple simile of this state of things, but it is a useful one You

know that a hen, if she has some eggs under her, will keep on sitting. You may take half her eggs away, you may take three-fourths of them away; but she still keeps on sitting, for I suppose she cannot count. Now, there are some Christians who are very much like that hen; they lose the most of their grace, yet they are just as happy as they were before. But, beloved, your spiritual sense ought to be something much higher than the instinct of a poor silly bird; your care of the divine grace entrusted to your charge ought to be something far superior to the care of a sitting hen over her eggs. To lose a little grace, is to lose a great deal. To miss even five minutes' communion with Christ, is to lack an incalculable blessing. Therefore, brethren, if you have lost the blessed rest you once enjoyed, do not be satisfied to remain in that condition. Do not sing, with Cowper,—

> "What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd,
> How sweet their memory still!"—

unless you can also say, with him,—

> "But now I find an aching void
> The world can never fill."

Never be happy unless you are truly resting in Jesus.

III. That brings us to our third point, which is, that THE BELIEVER, WHEN HE HAS GONE AWAY FROM HIS REST, SHOULD RETURN TO IT; and the sooner he does so, the better. Return at once, dear friends, if you have gone away from your rest. As Noah's dove came back to him, so fly back to Christ, who is your Noah, your rest, for that is the meaning of the name.

And I would argue with you to come back, first, *because it is quite certain that you can never rest anywhere else.* A man, who knows not the Lord Jesus Christ, can find rest in many places,—such rest as it is. Give him a large estate, abundance of money, and plenty of worldly friends, and you will find him quite content with those things. Like the mole, which has its home in the earth, he will go and burrow, and make his home there. An eagle cannot do that; and you are one of God's eagles if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. Neither in wealth, nor in honour, nor in pleasure, nor in conjugal domestic comfort, can you ever find perfect rest. You have eaten the white bread of heaven, so your mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of earth. You might have been satisfied with the world if you had never known Christ, but you are spoilt for that now. A countryman, who has lived all his life in a lonely village, where he never heard any music, might be charmed when he first listened to one of our street organs; but let him hear some of the sweet strains of true music, then the noise of the street organ jars upon his ear, he cannot endure it. So, beloved, your ears have been attuned to something better than the world's merriment; that can never satisfy you. To you, there is only one rest; and you must come back to it. Some of you backsliders have come in here to-night; you have not been here lately, and you have been trying to be happy and comfortable apart from God; but, as surely as the Lord loves you, you will have to come back to

him; and, the longer you stay away, the more bitter will be your weeping and lamentation when you do come back. Oh, that you would be wise, and return at once, and never wander away again! You know too much, and you have felt too much, ever to rest except in Christ, so do not attempt it.

Further, *this unrest puts you out of order for everything.* I should like to put the question to you, who love the Lord, but are not perfectly at rest in him,—Does not your present state very much spoil your devotions? You cannot pray as you used to do when you had such a sweet sense of the love of God; you know that you have not the power in prayer that you had, God does not hear you now as he once did. You used to run to him with your request, and come back with the favour you had asked of him; but, now, you ask many times, yet you receive no reply. The reason is, that you are walking contrary to him, and therefore he walks contrary to you.

Does not this want of restfulness also decrease your power of working for Christ? You cannot plead with a sinner as you used to do, you cannot speak to the anxious as you once did; for, while your own soul is in the dark, although you may be wishful to give light to others, you feel that you cannot do it. If you wish really to serve the Lord effectively, you must have the joy of the Lord to be your strength.

Then, besides, do you not think that *your want of rest is putting you into a state in which you are very liable to be tempted, and to be overcome?* "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;" and they are very sensible conies to do so, for there are many beasts of prey to seek their lives; but they run into the rock, and so they are safe. If you are out of your Rock, you are, like the coney, exposed to danger, so run back again as quickly as you can. You are never so safe as when you dwell in the wounded side of Jesus, peacefully resting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

There is one thing more that I must say to those of you who are not thus resting; that is, *this unrest can do no possible good.* I say this to myself as well as to you, for I, too, have sometimes erred in that way. I am ashamed to confess that it is so, for it ought not to have been the case, and I feel that I am more guilty than some of you in having done so; but I never yet have found any good come of a state of unrest. When I have not rested in God about everything, I have never found things improve any the more for all my worrying. Suppose a farmer grumbles against God because the wheat is spoiling; does his grumbling save it? Suppose a tradesman begins quarrelling with God because business is dull; he will not bring one more customer to his shop by all his complaining. No; there is no good in grumbling, and no use in complaining; the very best thing that you can do for yourself is just to come back, and rest in God, and say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. I have done all I can that was right for me to do; but I know that it is vain for me to rise up early, and

sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, unless he is pleased to send the increase. So I leave it all with him. I will not fret and worry any longer; I cannot improve matters if I do, so I will just leave everything in the Lord's hands." That is a right decision, my brother; for the end of your heart's controversy will be the beginning of your heart's rest. So, "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." But if thou wilt be unbelieving, if thou wilt rebel and revolt against thy God, thou shalt be smitten more and more, and no rest will come to thee at all. So, cry, with the psalmist, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" and not only say it, but do actually return at once unto thy rest.

IV. The last thing about which I am going to speak to you is this. THE BELIEVER HAS ONE EXCELLENT ENCOURAGEMENT TO RETURN: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The psalmist tells us in detail what the Lord had done for him; or, rather, he tells the Lord: "For thou hast delivered my soul from death." In the fourth verse, he prayed, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." That was a single prayer, but he received a triple answer to it, for God is always "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." So the psalmist proved it, and he was able to say to the Lord, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Now, believer, you ought to come back, and rest in God, because you have received from him these three marks of his divine favour.

First, *he has delivered your soul from death.* You will never die the second death. You are a saved man. As a believer in Christ, for you death has lost its sting. You may die, after a fashion; yet, living and believing in Jesus, you shall never see death in the full sense of that term. For you, there are no flaming fires of wrath, no pit that is bottomless, no curse of "Depart." Your soul has been delivered from death. Now, if that does not make you happy, what will? Why, my dear friends, the fact that God has saved our soul from death ought to fill our hearts with perpetual delight. Suppose I should be starved to death; still, it is a small matter now that my soul is delivered from going to hell for ever. Suppose I had to live in poverty and obscurity, and die like the martyrs at the stake; well, what of that? There is an everlasting crown that fadeth not away, that will abundantly recompense it all. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now that thou hast heard me. Do what thou wilt with me now that thou hast delivered my soul from death." I know how very poor you are, my dear friend, and what grievous burdens you have to carry; but, still, do not forget that the Lord has delivered your soul from death. You may be very poor, and very sick, and very sad, but you can never be lost. You may be laughed at by the ungodly, but you can never be cast into hell. Blessed be God for this!

Surely, that is one thing to make you glad, and to encourage you to return unto your rest.

Next, the psalmist says, "*Thou hast delivered mine eyes from tears;*" and the Lord has done the same for many of us. We have no cause for grief now. "No cause for grief?" exclaims one. No; none whatever. "But I have lost my dear mother; shall I not weep?" Well, she loved the Lord; so she is gone to heaven; she is now before the throne of the Most High. So, if thou dost weep because thou hast lost her, then immediately begin to sing with joy because she is up among the angels. "But I have lost my little child who was so very dear to me." Oh, well! in that case, thou art mother to one who is praising God day and night; so wipe those tears away. I rather like the idea of a young person, at Brighton, who asked that she might have grey horses to draw her to her funeral. Why not? Why always have black ones? Why not have the white horses of delight? Let those who linger here sorrow that their loved ones have gone, but let them not be so ungenerous as not to sympathize in the eternal joy upon which righteous souls have entered. No; wipe your tears away, for "ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "Oh, but!" cries another tried friend, "I have real cause for sorrow because I suffer so much, and I am so poor." Well, if it is so, it will all be over soon; and remember what the apostle says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Yes," you say, "but, still, you do not know how much I suffer." No, I do not; and you do not know how much I suffer; but I know this,—if the two of us put all our sufferings together, they are not worthy to be compared with the eternal love of the blessed God who sent us all these aches and pains that we feel. They are all sent by him in love, so why should we cry over them? He has wiped our tears away, so let us not weep any more; or, if tears must come, let the salt that is in them tend to our sanctification; but do not let us shed one rebellious tear,—no, not even if all we have in the world were taken from us.

> "Why should the soul a drop bemoan
> Who has a fountain near;—
> A fountain which will ever run
> With waters sweet and clear?"

If I have all things, I have them in my God; and if all things are gone from me, I would find them all again in him.

Now, lastly, *God has also delivered our feet from falling*, as he did in the case of the psalmist. I know that one reason why many do not fully rest is because they are afraid that they shall fall from grace,—afraid that they shall dishonour their profession, and so on. Now, dear friends, I hope that you will never get rid of the godly fear of falling into sin, and never lose that holy insecurity with regard to yourself; but do not let that feeling extend to your God. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ said, "My sheep

hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." He has delivered your feet from falling, so he will keep you. Therefore, begin to praise him and bless him this very moment. Cast away that fear of being cast away, and sing Jude's doxology, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

No, you have nothing at all to fret about; your soul is delivered from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from falling; so rest, rest, rest, rest! You will glorify God by resting. One of the highest acts of devotion is to rest in the Lord. God grant it to you now, at his table especially, for his name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LXXXV

In my brief comments upon this Psalm, I shall not feel bound to keep to the immediate occasion for which it was written, but shall seek to find a use for it in the present circumstances of God's saints.

Verse 1. *LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*

Whenever you are in a low state of mind or heart, remember God's past lovingkindnesses. Recall the record of what he has done for his people in ages long gone by, for he is the same God for ever and ever, and, therefore, what he has done in the past, he will do in the future. As the wise man said, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." It is certainly so concerning God's dealings. "Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land," even when it was stained with sin; "thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob," even when that captivity was brought upon the people by their own fault. Lord, bring back my captivity! Be favourable unto me! Deliver me from my spiritual declensions, and give me back my joy and peace!

2. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.*

What a sweet subject for our meditation we found, last Lord's-day morning,* in those words of the psalmist, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities"! Now, if God has indeed blotted out the sin of his people, what a plea this is to use with him for all that we still need from him! Will he pardon us, and yet leave us to perish? Will he pay such a ransom price as the blood of his well-beloved Son to set us free from the bondage of sin, and then will he not help us even to the end? Will he not lift up our heavy heart, and revive our drooping spirit? Ah! that he will if we know how to plead his former mercy, and to urge upon him that, because he has forgiven our iniquity, and covered all our sin, he should now heal our diseases, redeem our life from destruction, and crown us with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

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* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,492, "The First Note of my Song."

3, 4. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.*

"Let us have a special application of the general mercy. Thy wrath to thy children has passed away; so let us no longer sit down, and cower beneath it, fearful of its terrors. Lord, bring us back to thee! Our heart desires conversion, but thou alone canst give it to us to the full. Turn us, O God of our salvation; and we shall be turned."

5. *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*

"Thou mightest well do so if thou wert dealing with us only according to the strict requirements of thy righteous law; but we are thy children, Lord; and is a father always angry with his children? Thou hast forgiven us our iniquity; and, therefore, the great cause of thy wrath against us is gone. Now, O Lord, reveal thy love to us! Let us not any longer lie under the sense of our guilt, or feel the absence of the joy and peace which thou givest unto those whom thou forgivest."

6. *Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*

"We have got down very low, great God. We have been, these last six days, mixing with the world, and perhaps we have forgotten thee. Come to us, we pray thee. Give us fresh life; 'revive us again.' Many a time hast thou, spiritually, raised us up as from the grave's mouth; wilt thou not do it again? All that thou hast done for us in the past will be lost if thou dost not continue thy mercy to us. 'Wilt thou not revive us again?' Thou lovest to see us happy, and thou art thyself the happy God; oh, make us happy, too, by reviving us, 'that thy people may rejoice in thee'!"

7. *Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.*

So far, the Psalm is a prayer. Now the psalmist seems to stop, and wait for the answer to his supplication. Beloved, always do that when you pray. When you have spoken to God, wait for him to speak to you. Do not let it appear that your prayer needs no answer; but really expect a reply to it, and then, in patience and in silence, wait for it.

8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.*

For, if they do, their darkness will return, and they will again have to mourn their Lord's absence. Peradventure, the rod will fall more heavily upon them, and their souls will sink into a deeper despondency. For a Christian to be a fool once, is a sad thing; but for him to turn again to folly, is a multiplied form of iniquity which God will surely punish.

9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.*

O beloved brethren and sisters, lay hold on that salvation which is nigh unto you, and exult in it; and, even now, let your spirits feel the glow of his glory shining in your soul!

10. *Mercy and truth are met together;*

But only at one place,—the cross of Calvary, where Jesus died; there, "mercy and truth are met together;"—

10. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

Through Christ's death, sin has been punished, sinners are saved, God's law is vindicated, and the depths of his mercy are displayed: "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth;—*

Promises, which lay hidden in God's Word, like seeds buried in the

earth, shall spring up before our eyes, like flowers carpeting the earth with beauty: "Truth shall spring out of the earth;"—

11. *And righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

As if so pleased with the state of things brought about by the atoning sacrifice of Christ that it flung up the windows of heaven to look down and see this great sight: "Righteousness shall look down from heaven."

12, 13. *Yea, the* LORD *shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

May God thus revive us, by his Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake! **Amen.**

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IN MEMORIAM.—A SONG OF SIGHS.

BY MRS. C. H. SPURGEON.

Last month, we gave a preliminary notice of MRS. C. H. SPURGEON'S new book, "*A Basket of Summer Fruit*," which can now be obtained through all booksellers and colporteurs, or direct from Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster. It is published at 1s. 6d.,—the same price as *A Carillon of Bells* and "*A Cluster of Camphire*," with which it is uniform. Our readers will rejoice to learn that Mrs. Spurgeon has included in the volume the "In Memoriam,—A Song of Sighs," which she wrote, in 1892, after returning from Mentone. Many mourners were greatly cheered by it when it was first published, and there have been frequent requests for it to be reprinted. Several of the other chapters in the book are of a comforting character, so that it will be a most appropriate present for the bereaved, and the tried and troubled.—*From "Notices of Books" in "The Sword and the Trowel" for December.*

"From Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster we have received 'A Basket of Summer Fruit,' by Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon, a number of brief devotional papers touching on various points of interest in spiritual life, written with great beauty of style and fervour of feeling; a little work that will be highly prized by all who can appreciate fine devotional thought, and desire the extension of Christ's Kingdom."—*The Baptist Times and Freeman.*

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THE PLEASURES OF PIETY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 29TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Thursday Evening, during the summer of 1858.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet."—Psalm civ. 34.

IT has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly affirmed, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtless persons have supposed, is not becoming to the young; it checks the ardour of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with grey heads, who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave; it may be suitable for those who are in poverty and deep trial; but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful, and happy young man, this is generally said to be out of the question.

Now, there is no greater falsehood than that. No man is so happy but he would be happier still if he had true religion. The man, with the greatest abundance of earthly pleasure or treasure, whose barns are full of store, and whose presses burst with new wine, would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart; rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity, it would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup, it would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights, and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful, at the same time that it can make the joyous ones more joyful still. It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness; it can make the eye sparkle with tenfold more brilliance; and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain of atoning mercy, if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life. Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to

enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament, which hath promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future, when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. He will be able to say, as the psalmist does in this Psalm, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."

I. First, let us consider THE VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT OF MEDITATION mentioned in our text: "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet."

Christian, thou needest no greater inducement to excite thee to meditation than the subject here proposed: "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet." To whom does that word "him" refer? I suppose it may refer to all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity. My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet! And, verily, if you sit down to *meditate upon God the Father*, and reflect on his sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love toward his elect people,—if you think of God the Father as the great Author and Originator of the plan of salvation,—if you think of him as the mighty Being who has said that, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us,—if you look to him as the Giver of his only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, his best gift, will with him also freely give us all things, —if you consider him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations in the ingathering of every chosen, ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manner and matter of the Father's love.

Or, if you choose, you shall *think of God the Holy Spirit;* you shall consider his marvellous operations on your own heart,—how he quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins,—how he brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold,—how he called you with such mighty efficacy that you could not resist his voice,—how he drew you with the wondrous cords of his almighty love. If you think how often he has helped you in the hour of peril,—how frequently he has comforted you with a promise in times of distress and trouble; and, if you think that, like holy oil, he will always supply your lamp, and until life's last hour he will always replenish you with his influences, proving himself still your Teacher and your Guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Saviour face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,—in such contemplation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation.

But, at this time, I prefer to confine the application of this word "him" to *the person of our adorable Saviour:* "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon

one Person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace forgives my sins."

Thou precious Jesus! what can be a sweeter theme for my meditation than to think of thine exalted being,—to conceive of thee as the Son of God, who, with the golden compasses, struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of thee as the God who holds this mighty orb upon thy shoulders, and art, at the same time, the King of glory, before whom angels bow in lowliest homage; and yet to consider thee as likewise "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,"—

"In ties of blood with sinners one;"—

to conceive of thee as the Son of Mary, born of a virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race; to picture thee in all thy suffering life; to trace thee in all thy passion; to view thee in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement; and then to follow thee to Gabbatha, the pavement, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, "enduring the cross, despising the shame," when thy soul was made an offering for my sins, when thou didst die the reconciling death 'midst horrors still to all but God unknown;—verily, here is a meditation for my soul, which must be "sweet" for ever. I might begin, like the psalmist who wrote the forty-fifth Psalm, and say, "My heart is inditing (the marginal reading is, bubbleth up,) a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

Consider our Lord Jesus Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen, which you may take up, and hold in one way, and you see one kind of light, and then hold in another way, and you see another kind of light; and, whichever way you turn them, you will always see some precious sparkling light, and some new colours starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for your theme, sit down, and consider him, think of his relation to your own soul, and you will never get through that one subject. Think of his eternal relationship to you; recollect that the saints, in union with the Lamb, were from condemnation free before the world was made. Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean, even before you fell; and after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think

of your known and manifest relationship to him since you have been called by his grace. Think how he has become your Brother; how his heart has beaten in tenderest sympathy with yours; how he has kissed you with the kisses of his love, and how that love has been to you sweeter than wine.

Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered to you, "I am yours," and you have said, "My Beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments, when an angel has stooped from heaven, and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft, to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with him. Or think, if it please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by,—fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus, —yet not the sweat of blood,—when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship to Christ which is to be fully developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when you shall—

> "Greet the blood-besprinkled bands
> On the eternal shore;"—

and range the—

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Array'd in living green."

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as "more than a conqueror," and put a pearly crown upon your head, glittering more brightly than the stars. And think of that transporting hour when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesu's throne, you shall put it on his head, or lay it at his feet, and once more crown him Lord of your soul, as well as "Lord of all." Ah! if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer,—Surely, you have not tried to meditate; for your meditation of HIM must be sweet.

Suppose you have done thinking of him as he is related to you; consider him, next, as he is related to the wide world. Recollect that Jesus Christ says he came into the world that the world through him might be saved; and, undoubtedly, he will one day save the world, for he, who redeemed it by price, and by power, will restore it, and renew it from the effects of the Fall. Think of Jesus in this relationship as "the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in." He will come again to our earth, one day; and when he comes, he will find this world still defaced with the old curse upon it,—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, and pestilence, and war here still; but when he comes, he shall bid men "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" war shall be obliterated from among the sciences; he shall speak the Word, and there shall be a great company that will publish it. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ

shall surely come again! Christians, be ye waiting for the second coming of your Lord; and whilst ye wait, meditate upon that coming. Think, O my soul, of that august day when thou shalt see him with all his pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge himself upon his enemies! Think of all his triumphs when Satan shall be bound, and death shall be crushed, and hell shall be conquered, and he shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, "Lord over all, blessed for ever. Amen." "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Ah, Christian! you are not afraid to be alone a little while now, for want of subjects of meditation. Some persons say that they cannot bear to be even for an hour in solitude; they have nothing to do, nothing to think about. No Christian will ever talk so, surely; for let me but give him one word to think of,—Christ,—and he may spell that over for ever; let me give him the word Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nought, and that eternity is not half long enough for our glorious Saviour's praise. Yea, beloved, I believe that even when we get to heaven, we shall want no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. I know that there are some great divines, and learned philosophers, who have been telling us that, when we go to heaven, we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another; that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies; we shall behold all the wonders of creation; we shall explore the depths of science, so they tell us, and they say that there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine all this concerning heaven, is, that I have no objection that it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure. I hope you Christians all will have, and I know my Heavenly Father will let you have, whatsoever will make you happy; but while you are viewing stars, I will sit down, and look at Jesus; and if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say,—Ah! yes,—

> "But in His looks a glory stands,
> The noblest labour of God's hands;
> God in the person of his Son,
> Has all his mightiest works outdone."

But you will say, "You will become tired, surely, of looking at him." No, I should reply; I have been looking at but one of his hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in; and when I have lived ten thousand years more, I will take his other hand, and sit down, and look at each gaping wound, and then I may descend to his side, and his feet, and still I shall be able to say to him,—

> "Millions of years my wond'ring eyes
> Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
> And endless ages I'll adore
> The glories of thy love."

You may go flitting about as far as you like; I will sit there, and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God, and more of his works, in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of travelling on wings of light, though you should have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search. Brethren, our meditation of Christ will be sweet. There will be little else we shall want of heaven beside Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christlike; yea, Christ is the heaven of his people. To be in Christ, and to be with Christ, is the essence of heaven.

> "Not all the harps above
> Can make a heavenly place,
> Should Christ his residence remove,
> Or but conceal his face."

So, you see that Christ is the very precious subject of our meditation. Our meditation of him shall be sweet.

II. Now, in the second place, let me proceed to point out A BLESSED RESULT OF THIS MEDITATION: "My meditation of him shall be SWEET."

This result *depends very much upon the character of the one who meditates.* I know some persons, who come to chapel, who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the Benediction, and dismiss the assembly; they are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting Doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, "It is precious dry." If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind listening to that; but a meditation entirely upon Christ, would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah, friend! that is because of the taste you have got in your mouth; there is something wrong with your palate. You know, when we have been taking a certain kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavour, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So is it with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world's poor dainties; you have got some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips; and that spoils the glorious flavour of your meditation on Jesus; in fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it into your hearts. But the psalmist says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

What a mercy, dear friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For, I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet, at first, but has a bitter flavour afterwards; and there are too many things that are actually bitter, and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world, and how many will be the cases and bottles that you will see marked bitter! There are, perhaps, more of aloes put in our cup than of any other

ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy, then, it is that there is one thing that is sweet! "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet;" so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave,—have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, "Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my Husband: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'"? What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habakkuk's words, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And, oh! how many, when they have come even to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ, that death was swallowed up in victory!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste, through affliction and trouble, if you have been saying of the Lord, with Jeremiah, "He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes;" take a little of this choice cordial; I can assure you that it is sweet: *Lacrymæ Christi,* it is called. If thou wilt take these tears of Jesus, and put them in thy mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavour that is there now. Or, again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ as a piece of frankincense that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what thou hast in thy house; this shall make it redolent of Paradise, and shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden's garden, wafting the odour of perfect flowers. Ah! there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles, as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ. "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking *whether you have all had such a meditation upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?* I do not like ever to preach a sermon without pressing it home upon the consciences of all my hearers. I never care to bring to you the sword of the Spirit, and show it to you, and say, "There is a sword, and it is sharp." I always like to make you feel that it is sharp, by cutting you with it! Would to God that the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your

hearts now! When I see so many gathered together even on a week-day, I am astonished. When I came to London, I did not fancy that there would be half such a congregation as this even on the Sabbath, much less on a week-day. But wherefore have ye come, my brethren? What went ye out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? What have ye come to see? A prophet? Nay, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet. You have come to see and to hear of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. How many of you really do meditate upon Christ?

Christian men and women, do not many of you live below your privileges? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with Jesus? Methinks, if you had a free pass to heaven's palace, you would use it very often; if you might go there, and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Lord Jesus, the King of heaven, and he gives you that which can open the gates of heaven, and let you in to hold sweet fellowship with him, and yet you live without meditating upon his work, meditating upon his person, meditating upon his offices, and meditating upon his glory. Christian men and women, I say to you,—Is it not time to begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country, and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the gospel is preached in most places; but it is preached as it might be by humble bees in pitchers, —always with the same monotonous sound, and little or no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative It is very true that water does not run up-hill; but when you begin to meditate and pray over the Word, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to, and meditate themselves, and give you the gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts, and it will be precious food for your souls.

As for you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ, what do you think will become of you when your greatest bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavour? Yet "that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste" is but a dire presentiment. When you have to drink that gall in hell for ever,—when the cup of torments, which Jesus did *not* drain for you, will have to be drained by yourself,—what will you do then? The Christian can go to heaven because Christ has drunk damnation dry for him; but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. What will you do then? The first taste is bad enough, when you sip here the drops of remorse on account of sin; but that future cup in hell,—that terrific mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit,—what will you do when you have to drink that;—when your meditation will be, that you rejected Jesus, that you despised his gospel, that you scoffed at his Word? What will you do in that dread extremity? You business men, will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer, will it

be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Labouring man, will it be a sweet meditation to thee, to think that thy wages were spent in drunkenness, or thy Sabbaths profaned, and thy duties neglected? And thou, professor, will it be a sweet meditation to sit down, and think of thy hypocrisy? And, ah! ye carnally-minded men, who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, "whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame," will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last? Be assured of this; your sins must be your meditation then, if Christ is not your meditation now. May there be great searchings of heart among you! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnower's hand; they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate,—hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning, lest God should say, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

O wicked men! wicked men! I want to say just this last word to all of you who know not God, and then ye shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation; it shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He answered, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," said he, "and make me a chain of such-and-such a length." He went home; the work occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, "Go back, and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, "Take it, bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire." There were his wages for making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil! Your master, Satan, is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says, "Go and make it longer still." Next Sunday morning, you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Saturday night, you will be drunk, and put another link on; next Monday, you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, "Put more links on still!" And then, at last, the command will be, "Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." "For the wages of sin is death." There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do you good. You must have strong medicines sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply his own Word to your hearts, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 JOHN V.

Verse 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:*

These are very simple words, but they contain a great depth of meaning. The teaching conveyed by this Epistle is very profound, though the language is such as even a child can understand. There must be faith in Jesus Christ as the anointed Son of God; otherwise, there is no new birth, no regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

1. *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

If we love the Father, we love the Son. If we love God, we love all his people; all who are born into the divine family are the objects of our affection.

2, 3. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:*

Not, that we talk about our experience; not, that we use endearing expressions concerning the Saviour; not, that we are attentive to outward religious ordinances; but "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." A holy life is the best possible proof of true love to God.

3. *And his commandments are not grievous.*

To his people, they are charming: not grievous. They delight themselves in the law of God; and they only wish that they could be perfectly conformed to the divine will.

4. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

And the apostle gives a description of what kind of faith it is that overcometh the world.

5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

So that, it is faith in Jesus which is, first of all, the evidence of the new birth, and which is, afterwards, the weapon wielded by the new-born soul, with which it fights till it gains the victory over the world.

6. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only,—*

Cleansing us as to our lives: "not by water only,"—

6. *But by water and blood.*

The blood which takes away the guilt of our offences. There is a double cure for us in Christ Jesus our Lord; first, the putting away of all our past guilt; and, then, the delivering of our hearts from defilement, so that we live after a holy fashion.

6, 7. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven,—*

Or, "witness in heaven,"—

7, 8. *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

Blessed is the man who has that threefold witness,—the Spirit of God quickening him, the water cleansing his daily life, and the blood delivering his conscience from trouble, because he is delivered from sin by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

9. *If we receive the witness of men,—*

And we are constantly obliged to do that, for we could not get on at all if we did not believe our fellow-men; yet—

9—12. *The witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

Ah, then, my soul, if thou hast, by faith, embraced the Son of God, thou hast a life which can never die! Thou hast the life of God within thee; thou hast heaven begun within thee; and thou hast it now. Dear hearer, hast thou the Son of God? Hast thou taken him to thyself by a distinct believing grasp, saying, "This Christ shall be mine,—this blessed Jesus shall be my Saviour"? Then, you have the apostle's inspired declaration, "He that hath the Son hath life;" and his other declaration is equally true, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

The apostle said that they did believe, yet he wrote to them that they might believe on the name of the Son of God; because, he that believeth needs to believe more,—more as to matter, and more as to the firmness of the grip of his faith. There are some who do really believe on Christ who do not know that they have eternal life. They have it, but they scarcely realize that they have it; they are afraid to believe that it is theirs. But, here, the Holy Ghost assures us, through the apostle, that those who believe on the name of the Son of God have eternal life. Oh, what a comfort this is! Then, you can never perish. There are some who say that you can fall from grace; but how can that be? What kind of life would that be? It would be temporary life. But the Scripture saith, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Then, if it *be* everlasting, it *is* everlasting, and there cannot be any end to it. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well of Sychar, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

14. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:*

We do not wish to have a more unlimited promise than that; we do not ask God to hear our prayer if it is not according to his will. The true child of God does not wish to have his own will; but he says, "No, Lord; thou knowest much better than I do what to grant; so, when my will is contrary to thy will, thy will, not mine, be done! This is as gracious an assurance of answers to prayer as the true children of God wish to have: "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

15. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

That is, before we actually receive the answers to our petitions. After the prayer of faith, we know that our request has been granted, and we act upon the belief that we have already received what we asked of God. A true man's promise is as good as the performance of it; we unhesitatingly take a note of hand, or a promise to pay, when we know that it is drawn upon a reliable firm. We treat it as money; it passes from hand to hand, through the bankers, and is regarded as if it were the coin itself; then,

shall we not treat our God in this fashion when we have his promise to pay or to give? We have pleaded it in prayer; so, let us rise from our knees, not merely *hoping* that we shall receive what we have asked, but *believing* that we shall surely have it: "If we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

16, 17. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

There are multitudes of such sins; but there is a place, beyond which, if a man passes in sin, he becomes henceforth dead, and utterly insensible; and he will never be quickened, and never be saved. If we knew a man to be in such a condition as that, the apostle's words would apply to such a case: "I do not say that he shall pray for it." But, as we cannot tell that any man is in that condition, it is well for us to ask for grace to be able to pray for every sinner, however great his sin may be. We know that "all unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death:"

18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;*

That is to say, that is not the bent and current of his life. He makes mistakes, and he falls into errors, and he sins; but that is not the habitual description of his life.

18—21. *But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

At the time of the Reformation, there was a general order that this text should be put round the communion tables. I think it is time that it was put round the communion tables again: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;"—for that is one place where idols are often found, though not by any means the only one.

21. *Amen.*

And we say, "Amen; so let it be."

Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll writes, in "The British Monthly" Christmas Number:—

"We do not know more refreshing, awakening, suggestive, warming, and comforting pages in religious literature than those of 'The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.' For ministers and teachers they are simply indispensable. The preacher who does not possess some volumes of 'The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit,'—the more the better,—who does not read them to kindle his own soul, is poorly furnished for his work. It is by those who speak in the spirit of Spurgeon that England will be raised from its religious lethargy. Better part with all commentaries, German and otherwise, and be content with the Bible of Spurgeon, than neglect this signal trumpet-voice."

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